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"As I rode [illegible]ED UP AT THE WINDOW OF ROSILAND'S ROOM, AND SAW [illegible]AMED BY THE OLD MULLIONED WINDOW."

FOLLOW THE GLEAM

A TALE OF THE TIME OF OLIVER CROMWELL

BY JOSEPH HOCKING

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

BY J. FINNEMORE

"*Not of the sunlight,*
Not of the moonlight
Not of the starlight!
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow The Gleam."

TENNYSON'S *Merlin and the Gleam.*

LONDON
HODDER AND STOUGHTON
27, PATERNOSTER ROW
1903

Printed by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.

NOTE

THIS story is the third of the series of Historical Romances which I have planned to write, and is in many respects a natural sequence to the two which have preceded it. The first, "Lest We Forget," was a story of the time when Queen Mary, Cardinal Pole, and Stephen Gardiner cast such dark shadows over our land; the second, "A Flame of Fire," dealt with the period of the Spanish Armada; while "Follow the Gleam" deals with the stirring times of the great Civil War. In this last story my reading of history has led me to adopt an attitude which I believe is not generally taken by novelists who have sought to depict the great struggle which took place at that time. In this I think I am justified, for while the glamour of romance more naturally surrounds the head of Rupert than that of Oliver Cromwell, and while as a consequence the Ironside General and his followers have received but scant sympathy, some

of the principles for which they fought have since become the glory of our land. Neither do I find the "lovely Company" of which Cromwell spoke to be a canting, hypocritical crew, but on the whole a band of sincere, honest, although in some cases fanatical, men, who were ready to fight and to die for the faith that was in them.

Not that this tale is in any way a polemic, neither does it pretend to be a historical treatise. It is first and foremost a story, and while I have taken care to avoid any violation of history, I have sought to invest each principal character with a romantic interest.

JOSEPH HOCKING.

WOODFORD GREEN,
September, 1903.

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CHAPTER I

A WOMAN'S SMILE, AND A PLACE AT THE KING'S RIGHT HAND

THE story which I have set myself to tell rightfully begins on the day before I set out for London in the spring of 1640. For although much happened before that time, which doubtless went to the shaping of what afterwards took place, that which can be set down as a record of events really commenced at the period I have mentioned. Moreover, that day also commemorated my twenty-first birthday, which must always be an event of such importance as to set a youth thinking.

Of what took place prior to that time, there is no need that I should say much. Still, certain things must be mentioned in order to make matters clear. And this I wish to do at all costs, for I would fain make up for whatever I may lack in grace and beauty of writing, by a clear statement of facts and perfect truthfulness. Whether what I may say will be accepted as gospel truth I know not; nevertheless I will, as nearly as I can remember, set forth the happenings which took place in those days when England was, as some wit hath said, "like a tavern brawl from one end of the land to the other."

My father, Sir John Falkland, had, so I have been told, intended me for the Church, and spoke with pride of the time when he should see me vicar of St. Mary Magdalene Church, in the town of Launceston. And this he desired for three reasons. First, much of my father's estate was in the parish of Launceston; and although I, being a younger son, could not enter into possession of the lands, he desired to provide for my future by making me participate in the tithes, as well as hold a high position in the most important town and parish in the county of Cornwall. Then, again, he had certain views concerning religion which he desired to maintain, and he knew no better way of doing this than by placing his son over the ghostly interests of so important a parish. Moreover, he held that every father of sons should see to it that at least one entered the Church.

In this, however, he was doomed to disappointment, for, through happenings which I may not here set down, he was unable to send me to Oxford; and although I progressed fairly well in my studies, under the supervision of the Reverend Edward Piper, vicar of Lewannick, I showed no inclination for the study of divinity. I was, however, spoken of as a well-behaved boy, though somewhat self-willed, and my father troubled himself sorely to find the road whereby I might march to an honourable future.

I concluded my studies under Master Piper at the age of nineteen, and then for two years lived a somewhat aimless life, so far as taking steps to obtain worldly prosperity goes. During this time, however, my father—who had no daughters, but five sons, of whom I was the youngest—received into our home

one Rosiland Verona, a young maid who had been reared in Italy, but who was of English blood on her mother's side. Of the circumstances of her coming I was told but little, but I gathered that my mother had known both her father and mother before they were married; and when at length she became an orphan, it was arranged that my father and mother should act as her guardians until she came of age and entered into her fortune. This latter consisted mainly of her mother's dowry—a valuable estate of land in Devonshire. I heard moreover, that there was what they call a palazzo in Italy, but this was of so little value that it was recked little of.

The coming of Rosiland to our house made a great change. She was just turned seventeen years of age, and I saw at a glance that my two eldest brothers fell madly in love with her. Moreover, I was not long in learning that my father desired that my second eldest brother, Bartholomew—whom we called Bart for short—should wed Rosiland, and, in good time, enter into the estates. As for John, my eldest brother, named after my father, he would naturally inherit the Falkland estates. My father had also, so I learned, managed to arrange for the future of George and Nathaniel. For myself, however, there was, as far as I could gather, nothing done; and so, after Master Piper had finished with me, I was allowed to do pretty much as I pleased.

As a consequence I spent much time with Rosiland, much to the anger of both John and Bart. Still, as I was but a boy, they pretended to make light of it, especially as during the time she was with me she was with neither of them, who regarded each other as rivals.

Rosiland was in those days little more than a mischievous bundle of contradictions. If I am asked to describe her, I should say that her beauty was of the English order, while her temper savoured of the hot skies of Italy. She was impetuous, unreasonable, and, as my father said, fiery. Nevertheless, she won the heart of every member of our household. And this was no wonder, for, in spite of her temper, she was lovable in the extreme. A more truthful nature I never knew. She hated everything like deceit, and her indignation at anything mean or clownish had a marked effect on all my brothers.

At first I fought shy of her, for she had been bred a Papist; but she broke down all my dislike in two days, especially when I heard her say that she had loved her mother better than any one in the world, in spite of the fact that she was not of her father's religion. Moreover, she took kindly to our ways. She went to church with us, and declared that there was but little difference between our services and those of the Church of Rome. In this she was nearly right, for Archbishop Laud had issued such orders that short shrift was given to all the Puritans in our district, and it was commonly reported that matters relating to Church doctrines and practices were but little removed from those of Mary's time. In truth my father, who had always maintained a strong affection for the memory of Reginald Pole, had it that Laud was in communication with Rome, and that England would soon be under the dominion of the Roman See. Be that as it may, many in our district with Papist leanings made no secret of the fact, that so near was the reconciliation of the English Church with that of Rome that they did not violate

their consciences by attending the services at Launceston parish church.

No one was more pronounced about this than Rosiland, who spoke of King Charles as a good Catholic, but who was not able at that moment to profess his true faith. Indeed, in our many conversations she often chided me for loving Protestant ways and for defending those who fought against Mary.

"But you will soon learn better, Roderick," she would say; "and if you die before you return to the faith, I shall pray God to save you from a heretic's doom."

"I do not think I shall ever change," I would reply to her remarks. "England hath learned her lesson, and will not soon forget it."

"Ah, but it will. Even now your King is only waiting to avow himself as a child of the true faith."

I am afraid my replies were poor and unconvincing, because of a truth I knew little of what was doing at Whitehall, and of the great struggles between the King and the Parliament. Besides, the more I was with Rosiland the less did I think of State matters and the more did I think of her. I found myself dreaming of her at night, and finding excuses for being with her during the day, until, when my twenty-first birthday came, I was, although I had never spoken a word to her about it, as madly in love as a youth of that age could be.

And this I affirm was no wonder, for a more bewitching maid never breathed. Even now, as I look back over the long years, I cannot see how I could have resisted her, for, no matter what her mood might be, she always charmed me. When she

was serious she talked so sensibly and with such sound reason that I felt myself an ignoramus beside her; and then when, a minute afterwards, she became a very madcap for fun and mischief, she made me forget every serious thing on earth. I have seen her at prayers with such a look of religious rapture on her face that the most beautiful pictures of the saints looked poor and plain beside her; and I have seen her the same day in such a mad passion that John Knox, preaching to Mary, Queen of the Scots, must have been mild and dovelike compared with her.

As I have said, I never dared to breathe a word of my love for her, even to my mother; nevertheless, I dreamed of a time when I should tell her how dear she was to me, and win her for my wife.

However, nothing was said or done until my twenty-first birthday, which, as I said at the beginning, is really the commencement of my story.

That day a dinner was given in my honour. Several of our relations living in the near distance were invited; and after dinner my father, on rising to propose my health, prosperity, and happiness, said that which not only set my head a-whirling, but altered the whole course of my life. And this was no wonder, for he suddenly announced the astounding news that he had secured a post for me under the Earl of Strafford, and that I should be constantly under the eye of King Charles himself.

Fancy it! I, Roderick Falkland, youngest son of Sir John Falkland, without money and without prospects, was suddenly told that on the morrow I must set out for London town, to take service under the most powerful Minister of our times, and be constantly under the eye of the King himself! No

wonder I was struck dumb, while my head whirled like that of a fainting man.

Still I listened to my father's speech right to the very end; neither could I help being proud at the courtly and knightly way in which he spoke.

"It hath long been in my mind," said my father, "as to what I should do with Roderick, our youngest born. I have, I hope, done all that is befitting for John and Bartholomew, and George, and Nathaniel, but it puzzled me long what I should do for Roderick. It is true that Master Piper hath helped him to much learning, so that, although he hath not been to Oxford or Cambridge, he hath as much knowledge of Greek and Latin, of pencraft and bookcraft, as any clerk between the Tamar and the Land's End. Moreover, Master Piper hath well drilled him in those things which are befitting a gentleman, so that, being a youth of brains and good appearance, the noble Earl of Strafford will be no loser, but a gainer, by having my youngest son near him."

After this he went on to speak of the advantages and opportunities that were given me through this great mark of favour; of what Lord Falmouth had said when he sought my appointment, and of his hopes concerning my future.

"It now becometh the greatest dream of my life," concluded my father, "that my youngest son Roderick shall be of signal service to the land. The King is surrounded by enemies. Although he hath so far kept an unruly and rude Parliament in its place, that Parliament hath again been called, and it is not impossible that it will persist in its naughtiness by daring to seek to check the King in his gracious designs. This, of course, must not be. His Gracious

Majesty is King, King by the will of God, and none must seek to thwart his gracious will. That there are some slight alterations needed in our land, we do not deny; and these we shall have, for have we not the King's royal word? As for the rest—bah! The King is King, and Archbishop is Archbishop. Therefore"—and here my father spoke like a man in anger—"I have, through my noble friend Boscawen, obtained service for my son under the noble Earl of Strafford, the King's right hand. It will be Roderick's one business in life to support the throne. To that cause I give him, the most sacred cause under heaven. Should he fail in that, my curse be upon him. He is no longer son of mine. Should he fail in that, I would myself hunt him from county to county, and from sea to sea, until the world were rid of him. Should he in aught aid the King's enemies, or in any way favour those accursed Puritans who are seeking to undermine the King's power, he is only fit for the scaffold and the dung-heap. Oh yes, hear me, son Roderick, for I speak the words of truth and soberness: if thou in aught, ay, even if thou dost turn a hair's breadth towards supporting the King's enemies, then God's curse be upon thee! But thou art my son, and I have no fear. Thy name is Falkland; and although I have a namesake in London town who is not so friendly to the Lord Strafford as he should be, I could take my oath that thou wilt be faithful in thought and word and deed. And so I pledge thee and thy cause. Here's to my son Roderick. May he have health, riches, and happiness. May he ever be true to the cause of God and the King. May he follow the leading of God, whether He may lead to life or death!"

Now I rejoiced at all this, for although, out of pure mischief, I had sometimes taken the part of the Puritans when talking with Rosiland, I was really a Royalist to the heart's core. As for disappointing my father, why, death would be preferable. How could it be otherwise? He was a wise, and brave, and loyal gentleman; and what could a youngest son do but follow the lead of his father?

After this, many other speeches were made, but I heard naught of them. I was too eager to see the horse which I was told awaited me in the stables, and to think of the gay times I should have in London town. In spite of all this, however, a great sorrow came into my heart, for I reflected that in going to London I should leave Rosiland Verona, and should thereby have to give up all hopes of winning her love. For I felt sure that she did not as yet love me. How could she, when she so often teased me, angered me, and humiliated me? Besides, I knew that both John and Bart would take every opportunity to woo her, and thus she would naturally forget one who was more than two hundred miles away, although we had in a sense been playmates for more than a year.

So it came about that, bewildered as I was by the course of events, I made up my mind that I would try and see her alone before the day was out, and if possible devise some means to make her think of me when we were far away from each other.

My chance came before the sun went down. I saw her go away among the woods which lead down to the River Inney, and then, without hesitating a second, I followed her.

The time was now April, and although the trees were not yet covered, there were enough leaves to

make them very beautiful. Moreover, the smell of the spring flowers and the singing of the birds made my heart hopeful, in spite of myself, and so I took courage when at length I saw her sit down on the stump of a fallen tree.

"Rosiland," I said.

She gave a start, placed her hand before her eyes, and then, after a few moments, looked up with a laugh.

"Ah, Sir Roderick," she said gaily. "You see I call you by your future title already. I came down here just to dream of your high degree."

"Nay, do not laugh at me, Rosiland."

"Laugh at you! Laugh at one who will soon serve in the King's presence! For shame, sir!" Then with a curtsey she went on: "I pray that you will think kindly of those you leave in obscurity. We may be unknown, your lordship, but at least we, too, will be faithful."

"I almost wish I were not going," I blurted out.

"What, sir? Wish you were not going! Ah, but in a week from now you will be at the King's Court; you will meet with dames of high degree, and——"

"Wish I were back with you, Rosiland."

"Nay, wish that I may be made envious by seeing you in your gay attire, ay, and seeing noble dames smile on you."

"I care not a fig for their smiles."

"Nay, speak the truth, Lord Roderick."

"I care not a fig for their smiles," I repeated. "Shall I tell you why, Rosiland?"

"Ay, if thou canst find a lie big enough." This she said in such a pretty way that I could not take offence.

"Then it is because I love you, Rosiland, and because I shall never love any one else."

Her face became crimson as I spoke, and her eyes shone so that I was afraid she was angry with me. But she spoke no word; she only looked at me in a strange way that I could not understand.

"That is why I grieve to go away, and why I can never care for another woman," I went on, speaking in the tones of a man of thirty-five rather than of a boy of twenty-one. "Even now I would willingly give up my prospects at Charles's Court, if I could only wed you and live with you on one of my father's farms."

"For shame!" she cried. "This is the talk of a clown, and not of one destined to be a King's counsellor. How, think you, can a man win a maid's love by talking as though he were a yeoman?"

This she said angrily, and yet her words made my heart warm, I knew not why.

"Nay, I spoke only as my heart dictated," I replied. "Nevertheless I will do my father's bidding, else I should be a false son, and no gentleman. But, Rosiland, will you think of me sometimes when I am away?"

"That I will, my lord," she said mockingly; "and I trust your poor serving-maid will find favour in your sight."

"Nay, Rosiland, but listen seriously. You be only just eighteen, and I am told you may not marry until you be twenty-one. Will you at least wait for me until that time? Do you love your playmate a little? for I love you with all my life."

"Sir John Falkland is my guardian," she said, turning her head away

"He is a kind and honourable gentleman," I said, "and therefore——"

"Would be much angered if he knew you sought a maid's hand in marriage without first consulting him."

"I will go to him," I cried eagerly. "I will this very night ask him——"

"No, no—not that: he might . . . that is, you must not go to him."

"But you said——"

"Never mind what I said. You must not go; you must not breathe a word of what you said to me. Nevertheless, Roderick—nothing can be as you say."

"And why?"

"Because I am of the true faith, and——"

"Is that all?" I interrupted eagerly.

"Is not that enough?"

"Your mother was of one faith, and your father of another," I interrupted warmly.

"Still—Roderick, is what you say true?"

"That I love you? Ay, almost since the first day you came."

"Then, Roderick——" Here she hesitated, like one wanting words. "But no," she went on presently, "nothing more must be said; except, Roderick, you will stand by the King always, won't you?"

"Always—always!"

"You hate the King's enemies?"

"Ay, that I do. God save the King!"

"Then, Roderick, I will tell you this"—and her voice became very soft and tender, and her eyes became full of tears—"I love not your brother Bart, nor your brother John."

"No?" I cried joyfully.

"And I would rather die than wed either of them."

"Yes, yes—go on."

"But, Roderick . . . well, come back when I am twenty-one, and then you may tell me again what you have told me now."

I could have shouted for joy. For not only were her words such as would turn any youth's brain, but she said them in such a winsome way that my heart seemed to grow so big that I could hardly breathe.

"But mind," she went on quickly, "if you are not faithful to the King, do not dare to come. If you are in aught disloyal, if you in aught side with those of the new religion, then——"

"Of course, of course," I said confidently. "Why, for that matter, I am nearly of the same religion as you are. Already, I am told, the Pope hath offered Archbishop Laud a Cardinal's hat; and my father hath it that the Pope will make the English Church such concessions that we shall be altogether of the same religion."

"And will you strive for this—work for this?"

"I love not to think of the cruelties of Mary's time coming back," I said hesitatingly.

"That is all lies—all lies!" she cried. "It is the will of God that there shall be one fold and one Shepherd. If you will promise to serve the King, to stand by him under all circumstances, and to aid in the work of the great Archbishop, then . . . but I have told you, Roderick."

"Oh, yes," I cried; "I shall be faithful. I am for the King and the Church." And this I said with assurance, as was natural, being the son of Sir John Falkland.

"If you do not," she answered—"ah, then I would rather die than even touch you with the tips of my fingers."

"Ah, but I will," I said. "We are betrothed, Rosiland."

"No, no. I promise nothing save what I have said—nothing. You may see other maids who will drive me out of your mind. You may cease to think of me. And so no one must know what we have said to each other. But in three years, then . . . but I need not say it again."

"But I shall regard myself as betrothed. I shall never think of a maid other than you, for I do love you, Rosiland."

At this she looked at me in such a way that, before I knew the words had passed my lips, I asked her to kiss me.

"No," she said quickly, "no. That must wait until that time when—when—but you know, Roderick," and with that she laughed at me so saucily that but for the look in her eyes I should have thought she had been fooling me all the time.

A few minutes later we wended our way back to the house as we had been wont to do, and when we drew near she rushed away from me like one afraid; while I, my heart all bounding with joy, was just going to the stable to see my new horse, when a servant came to me, saying that my mother wished to see me.

Now a summons from my mother was always immediately obeyed by me, so I resorted to her room right quickly; but I never thought as I went that what she had to say to me would have so impressed me, neither did I think that her words would mean to

me what they did; for although they seemed at the time to be simple enough, ay, and full of motherly love too, they influenced my career even more than my father's commands or the tender tones of Rosiland Verona.

CHAPTER II

HOW MY FATHER AND MOTHER AND ROSILAND BADE ME GOD-SPEED

I FOUND my mother sitting alone, and although she met me with a smile I saw that her eyes were swollen with weeping.

"Nay, mother dear," I said, stooping and kissing her, "do not weep, else I shall go away with a weight upon my heart."

To this she made no reply, save to kiss me again and again, and fondle my right hand in both of hers.

"Do you grieve that I go away, mother?" I asked. "If you do, I will e'en now go to my father and ask him to send George or Nathaniel in my place."

"No, no, Roderick," she answered, with a wintry smile. "You must go as your father hath said. Besides, do you think it would make matters better if one of thy brothers went instead of thee? Dost think that thou art dearer to me than they? For shame! And still thou art but a child to me, even although thou hast to-day come to a man's estate. Besides, it seems but as yesterday that I heard thee say thy prayers at night before going to bed. I can scarcely believe that thou art a full-grown man, with a beard beginning to appear on thy chin."

At this I laughed, but rather shamefacedly, as would be the case, I expect, with any boy of twenty-one.

"Dost say thy prayers each night and morn, Roderick?" she asked presently.

"Ay, mother, always."

"That is well. Never forget to do that, Roderick—never. If thou dost promise that, it will make losing thee easier."

"Then, mother, I promise, right gladly."

"That is well, that is well."

For a time she was silent, while I knelt by her side wondering whether this was all she wished to say.

"Thy father hath long been planning for this," she said presently.

"He never told me aught," I replied.

"That is thy father's way. He wanted to make all things ready before he told thee. Moreover, he desired to tell thee on thy twenty-first birthday. It is thy fortune, Roderick."

"My fortune, mother?"

"Ay, beyond the fifty pounds thy father will give thee in the morning, it is all thou wilt have. But what of that? He hath found thee a position of trust, a place of honour—a place at the King's right hand."

At this my heart began to swell with pride. With such prospects nothing seemed impossible.

"It is thy father's hope that thou wilt render such service to the King that he will reward thee with riches and honour. If thou dost fail in this, I believe his heart would break."

"If faithfulness and devotion can win this, mother then will I win it," I cried confidently; for youth

recks not of difficulty, and fondly dreams that all things are possible.

"It is said that there is much trouble at Court," said my mother, "and that the King is much disturbed by the ways of many. As you know, many hundreds of the Puritans have left the country and gone to the New World. This hath bred much discontent."

"Ay, and we be well rid of these sour-faced Puritans," I replied. "What would they, I wonder? Is it for ignorant men to set up a religion of their own against the King's will—and the Archbishop's?" I added, after a moment's pause.

"Roderick," said my mother eagerly, "know you aught, have you heard aught, of the doings at Court?"

"But little, mother."

"It is said that—that the evil and indecent scenes so common in King James's days be not done away with," said my mother, looking steadily into my eyes.

I looked at her in wonder, for in those days I knew nothing of what was common talk in London town.

"There was much drinking and much evil-living, not only among men, but women," she went on. "It is true that the Duke of Buckingham is dead—but—Roderick, thou wilt never forget that thy mother is praying for thee, never forget that thou hast promised to say thy prayers night and morning."

"Never, mother—never."

"It is well. And thou wilt promise this, Roderick—thou wilt always seek to do the right?"

"I will obey God and the King," I said, with a youth's enthusiasm and confidence.

"Ay, and God first," she said.

I looked at her questioningly.

"God first," she repeated. "Listen, Roderick. Thou art going from a quiet home to a gay Court. Thou wilt see many things which are strange to thee; but thou hast been taught to fear God all thy life. It may be that at times the path of right may seem to be hard to find. Ay, there may be times when the right may appear wrong and the wrong right. It is then that thou must turn to God for guidance and help, ay, and God *will* guide thee. And this is my will, Roderick. Thou must always follow the guidance of God."

I looked at her wonderingly, for her meaning was not yet plain to me.

"How may I know that God is guiding me?" I asked.

"Thou art a Christian—a gentleman!" she cried.

"Yes, so I trust, mother."

"And thus thou knowest what conscience is, what honour is."

"Ay," I replied.

"It is said of Luther when he stood before his judges that he cried out, 'It is neither safe nor prudent to do aught against conscience. Here stand I. I can do no other. God help me.' Well, those be wise words, great words, Roderick. Conscience is the light of God, and it is for every Christian, every gentleman, to be true to his conscience."

"Ay," I replied again.

"And you will do this, Roderick? Always do this, come weal, or come woe. Follow the light of God! That light will always shine, my son, if you will but diligently seek it. And to guide you in your seeking I give you this New Testament, which I would have you read every day."

Now I must confess this did not please me much; nevertheless, it was my mother who spoke, and therefore I could do naught but promise. Besides, as I said to myself, I was safe in promising, for I was going to be a servant of the King's chief Minister, and a man could do no wrong if he obeyed the King. My dream was to be a true gentleman. From whom could I learn the secret of my desire better than to copy the ways and manners of him who was set by God to guide His people?

"Ay, I promise this, mother," I replied.

"Always to be true to conscience, always to be true to the call of God. And, Roderick, if sometimes the light of conscience be but a gleam in the darkness, then you will follow the gleam?"

"Ay," I replied; "that will I do, mother."

"That is well, Roderick," said my mother with a sigh, which seemed to tell me that a great burden had rolled from her heart.

After this she spoke quite gaily of my future, of the honourable name she hoped I should win, and presently of the home-coming, which should mean great and gay doings throughout the whole countryside. For my mother was not a lady of solemn face, neither did she discourage mirth and laughter; rather she taught us to be gay, and assisted us in our merriment like one whose heart was glad. And so in truth it was; for while she was the noblest and purest woman in England, she was not solemn nor sad, as the Puritans were said to be, but joyous and happy.

"I have prepared gay attire for thee, too, Roderick," she said after awhile, "for I would not that my son shall go to the Court of Charles dressed like a clown, and to this end I have with my own hands prepared

for thy journey to-morrow. For although all things have been kept a secret from thee, thy father and I have spoken long and often concerning them."

The next morning I was, as may be thought, up betimes. I visited the stable, and saw to it that my horse was well groomed and fed, and then, when breakfast was over, I prepared for my journey.

I well recall that April morning, for the sight which met me was not easily forgotten. All around in the woods near by, and on the tall trees which surrounded the house, the birds were singing their love-songs, and the bees, drawn forth from their hives by the bright warmth of the sun, were humming around as though the honeydew of summer had begun to fall. The spring was well advanced that year, I remember; and the wallflowers, which we called "bloody warriors," were in full bloom. Other flowers, moreover, were appearing, so that the morning air was scented with a perfume such as I have never smelt outside my native county. My horse, King Charles, a great brown steed, standing fully sixteen hands high, was stamping in the courtyard, while my brothers stood by him, marking his good points, and telling each other that I was a lucky fellow. My saddle-bags were filled, and all things were ready for my departure.

I remember, moreover, that I buckled on my sword, the use of which my father had himself taught me, with great pride; my pistols were carefully primed and loaded, and as I put them in the holster I strode out with a jaunty air, as though I had already won my way into the King's favour.

"See that thou dost make thy fortune," cried George.

"And marry a rich Court dame," said John.

"And get knighted," added Bart.

"And see to it that thy rich Court dame hath a fine estate of land, where I can join in thy gay doings," said Nathaniel.

At this I laughed in great good-humour, although my heart was heavy. Moreover, I noted that Rosiland was not present, which saddened me much. It is true she had appeared at breakfast, but she had gone away directly after.

"She will surely come and bid me God-speed before I go," I thought, and it was because of this that I delayed my departure somewhat by examining King Charles's girths and lengthening the stirrups.

"I wish it were I," cried Bart.

"Thou hast neither brains nor manners fit," retorted John.

"Brains enough to keep sober," replied Bart; but to this John did not reply, for at that moment Rosiland and mother came into the yard.

I shook hands with each of my brothers, who gave me fresh parting advice, with much raillery.

"Fight the Puritans," said one.

"And keep thy feathers curled," said another.

"And do not come back until thou hast made a fortune," said a third; to all of which I answered laughingly, and then turned to my father.

"I send you forth with great pride, Roderick," he said. "You have a Cavalier's heart, and you wear a Cavalier's attire. Let your motto always be, 'God and the King.' Never fail in that, or never dare to show thy face to me again. Fair weather or foul, wrong or right, fight for the King. Remember your fortune and your future all depend on that."

"Ay, ay, father."

"And here be fifty pounds. It may be there will be footpads on the road; but thou hast a sword by thy side which thou knowest how to use, and pistols in thine holster which are primed and loaded. Besides, at Launceston town thou wilt meet Sir Faithful Fortescue and his men, so all will be well. I meant to have accompanied thee there, but it cannot be. Still, it matters not. It is but a few miles there, and all will be safe. Now, then, thy future is in thine own hands, and it lies in this motto, 'For God and the King.' Fight every man who saith otherwise—ay, fight ten men if needs be, and ne'er fear the results. And one thing more."

Here my father drew nearer to me, and spoke in lower tones.

"Tell the noble Earl of Strafford that I send thee to him with the command to be faithful to the King and himself at all hazards, and—and if ever thou dost get the ear of the King, tell him from thy father, Sir John Falkland, that the Cornish be loyal to a man; ay, tell him that every man of quality is faithful, and that the men of Cornwall be ready at any moment to take up arms for his defence. Tell him that I, in case of need, could raise two hundred swords."

"Ay, father," I replied.

"If there ever be danger to the King—from which may God save him—nothing could give me greater joy than that my son Roderick should lead his father's retainers. So go, my son. 'For God and the King.' Always remember that."

As for my mother, she kissed me many times.

"Good-bye, and God speed you, my boy," she said tearfully; "and, Roderick—follow the gleam."

I am afraid my good-bye was not so tender to her as I meant it, for I saw that Rosiland stood apart as though she cared not for me. In truth, my heart was so heavy at this that I turned to my horse as if to mount, and then, not able to command myself longer, I said:

"And, Rosiland, will you not wish me God-speed?"

At this, with mock humility she came up.

"Worthy knight," she said, "your humble handmaid wishes you a pleasant journey to London town. I have naught to give you save a charm against witchcraft and evil spirits, which may you be pleased to take."

At this she put a quaintly-worked sachet in my hands, which I took eagerly and put carefully in my pouch.

"And may I not have a kiss at parting?" I said, stammering and turning as red as a turkey-cock's head.

"That you may not," she said demurely, but with such a look in her eyes that my heart started beating wildly. And yet, because I knew that the eyes of both John and Bart were upon us, I said no word, although I vowed that I would win both fame and fortune, so that I could come back and claim her as my own. Moreover, I comforted myself with the thought that perchance she had placed some writing in the sachet, which I determined to examine the moment I was away from prying eyes.

Still I held her hand in mine, and as I did so my heart seemed on fire.

"I am sure you will be a faithful knight, and worthy of the great service that you enter," she said, still demurely; and to my brothers I doubt not that

her leave-taking seemed mere play-acting; but I knew otherwise, for I felt her hand quivering in mine, while her face was very pale. "And if your worship be faithful and loyal," she went on, "then nothing will be impossible. And so your humble handmaid looks forward to your home-coming with great happiness. God be with you."

With that she drew her hand away from me, and without another word, but with a mock curtsey, which confirmed my brothers in the belief that she was play-acting, as was often her wont, she went back to the house.

So again shaking my father's hand, and after kissing my mother many times more, I mounted my horse, while the servants, to whom I had bidden good-bye before, came forward and gave me a great cheer; the which I heeded not, for as I rode away I looked up at the window of Rosiland's room and saw her face framed by the old mullioned window. It was very pale and sad, but there was such a light in her eyes as I shall never forget to my dying day.

"For God and the King," I said to myself as I touched my horse's sides with my spurred heels. "For God and the King; then shall she be my wife, and then shall I have my heart's desire."

Not so much as a serving man accompanied me to Launceston town, and for this I was right glad, because I desired to be alone in order to think of all that had happened since the morning before. In truth, it seemed to me as I rode forward that I had not only reached a man's estate, but that I had also changed from a boy to a man in twenty-four hours. When I had descended, and my mother had kissed me and wished me all blessing, I had never dreamed

of what awaited me. Therefore, when I called to mind that since then I had changed my life from idle dreaming to active service, and that instead of being a mere younger son, without much to hope for, I had become servant to the great Earl of Strafford, I was well nigh bewildered at my own greatness. But that was not all, nay, nor even the greatest part; for Rosiland had as good as confessed that her heart was warm towards me, and that seemed to me the greatest thing in the world.

Therefore, as soon as I came to a lonely place, I took from my pocket the sachet she had given me, and opened it with a fast-beating heart; for, as may be imagined, this little thing was more to me than the purse containing fifty pounds which my father had placed in my hands.

The sachet contained only two things. The first was a little trinket shaped like a heart, inside of which was placed a tiny lock of Rosiland's hair. Black as a raven's wing it was, and yet tinged with gold withal. Perhaps this may seem like a contradiction, yet so it was. When she sat in the shade her hair, which was arranged round her head like a nimbus, was glossy black—not straight and coarse, but rich in texture and curling freely, and withal so beautiful that I had longed to take it in my hand. In the sunlight, however, it was altogether changed, for it gleamed golden, as though interwoven between each tress a band of gold were hidden.

"Ah," I said to myself, "this is a charm against witchcraft; and a most potent charm it is, too. Every time I look at it I shall think of Rosiland's face, and then all the power of evil will be destroyed."

The other thing in the sachet was a piece of paper,

and this I unfolded eagerly, for I saw that she had been writing thereon. And these were the words I read:

"This, with my faith and my love. Be faithful to God, the King, and what you said beneath the elm trees, and then naught matters. But never come back to me else. *A Rividerci.*"

That was all, but it filled my heart with joy. How could it be otherwise? For I did not see the clouds rising, neither did I dream of aught save of my coming back bearing riches and honour. If I had known how and when I should meet her next I should not have shouted with joy, neither should I have galloped gaily into Launceston town, where, standing by the gates of the old castle, stood Sir Faithful Fortescue and his servants.

CHAPTER III

TELLS OF WHAT HAPPENED ON OUR JOURNEY FROM THE RIVER TAMAR TO LONDON TOWN, AND HOW I FIRST SAW THE GREAT EARL OF STRAFFORD

SIR FAITHFUL FORTESCUE greeted me most kindly, although he seemed in haste to depart.

"I have heard strange rumours, lad," said he, "and we have no time to waste. So let us get to horse again without delay, and, if God wills, we will leave Cornwall many miles behind before we rest for our midday meal."

"Strange rumours, Sir Faithful?" said I questioningly. "Nothing serious, I hope."

"That's as may be," he replied gravely. "I will not say what they may be just now; but whether they be true or false, the King hath need of all loyal men, so let us away."

Even then, in spite of my inexperience, I could not help thinking that I could do but little to help the King, but I had the heart to do all that in me lay. Besides, now that I had started and had said my adieus, I was as eager as he to get to London town; and so, by the time the clock at Launceston Church struck nine, we had left Westgate, which was one of the main entrances to the town, and were descending the hill on the other side. Before ten o'clock we had

crossed the river which runs through Lifton, and had therefore entered Devon.

"Know you aught of the great Earl of Strafford?" asked Sir Faithful presently.

"Naught save that he is in favour with the King, is wise in counsel, and brave as a man may well be," I replied.

"Ay, he is all that, and more," he replied.

"And what more?" I asked; for now that I had once started on my journey I was eager to obtain knowledge concerning my future master.

"A man always knows best that which he finds out himself, Master Roderick," replied Sir Faithful, somewhat curtly I thought; but I paid little heed, because I fondly imagined that life in London would be so joyous that naught would be able to grieve me.

Presently we came upon the Dartmoors, a tract of country so wild and dreary that I felt like catching my breath for very wonder, for up to now I had travelled but little. It is true I had crossed the Altarnun moors on my way to Bodmin town; but these, even although Rough Tor—or, as the people called it for short, Router—and Brown Willy stood amidst them, were neither so wild nor imposing as the Dartmoors; for Altarnun moors are not only much smaller, but they are, with the exception of the two hills I have mentioned, somewhat flat, and, when one knows the track, easy to cross; but the Dartmoors are full of hills and dales, now rising to rocky peaks and again descending to deep gullies. A more lonely region, moreover, I had never seen. Here and there a lonely hut might be seen, but mainly the whole stretch of country was barren and uninhabited.

At midday we stopped at a wayside inn, where we

partook of a homely meal of coarse, ill-cooked beef, some very dark, heavy bread, and a jug of home-brewed beer. To me it seemed poor fare, but I ate it heartily, and with keen relish. And this was no wonder, for the Dartmoor air is enough to give an edge to any man's appetite, while a youth of twenty-one is not over-particular as to the nature of his fare.

After an hour we were on horseback again, and by six o'clock at night we had reached Crediton. Here Sir Faithful decided to push on for Exeter, for, as he said, if any news was stirring, one would be more likely to hear it at Exeter than at such a place as Crediton. This we were able to do with ease, for we had left the hilly country and bad roads far behind, and had entered a region where the hills were gentle and the roads good.

Before dark, therefore, we drew up at the King Charles Inn, which we learnt was the best in the town, and where we were told we could have food both for man and beast, and that of the very best.

Leaving the stable-boys, together with our own lads, to see to it that the horses were well-cared for, we made our way into the inn and ordered supper to be brought without delay.

"Does your worship desire a private room?" asked the innkeeper of Sir Faithful.

"Nay, my good host," replied Sir Faithful; "that is, providing you have a room where men of quality meet."

"Men of quality!" rejoined the innkeeper. "I know not, worshipful sir, who you may be, but even at this very hour I would make bold to wager that there is in the parlour gentlefolk equal to yourself.

There is Master Throgmorton, and Master George Grenville, and——"

"Be they here?" cried Sir Faithful quickly.

"Ay, that they be. Know you them?"

"Passing well," replied Sir Faithful. "We will, therefore, if they offer no objection, join such goodly company, and without delay."

"And who may I say you are, worshipful sir?" said the innkeeper.

"Sir Faithful Fortescue, and his friend Master Roderick Falkland," he replied.

"Sir Faithful Fortescue, of Boconnoc."

"Ay, of Boconnoc."

"Then in truth my house is honoured. And Master Roderick Falkland, too! Any kinsman of Lord Falkland, if I may make so bold as to ask?"

"Ay, Master Falkland's father is own cousin to Lord Falkland."

"Then, worshipful gentlemen, naught in Exeter shall be refused to you; and, in saying that, you may content yourself that not even King Charles himself will have a nobler supper than you shall have; while as for beds, all the down taken from the best geese in Devonshire is at your command. And a man can say no more than that, even if you were the King; for, as all the world knows, Devonshire is the queen of all the counties, excepting, of course, now that your worships honour my house, Cornwall, while Exeter is the very flower of Devonshire. Therefore—but I will e'en go and inform these worthy gentlemen of your coming; and then, before you have time to wash away your riding-dust, the best supper in England shall be spread."

On this the worthy host, Richard Gerry by name, left us, while Sir Faithful whispered in my ear:

"These men, Throgmorton and Grenville, in spite of their good names, be but half-hearted King's men. The grandfather of Master Throgmorton played but a sorry game in Queen Mary's time, while Master Grenville——"

"May be a descendant of the great Sir Richard," I interrupted.

"Ay, that he may; but if he sides with Parliament now, what is the use of his talking about an ancestor who fought for Queen Bess? But fortune favours us. They will know the news, and I shall be glad to talk with any man who will tell me that."

Whereupon Master Richard Gerry returned saying that his other guests would joyfully welcome us, but at the same time hinting that a day on horseback in springtime always meant mud-splashes.

We therefore fell in with the innkeeper's evident desires, but were not long before we stood in the presence of the men whose loyalty was, according to Sir Faithful, somewhat doubtful.

"Well, what news?" asked Sir Faithful, after courtesies had been exchanged. "Hath any tidings reached Exeter from London of late?"

"Ay, great tidings," replied Master Throgmorton. "The Parliament which the King summoned to do his will but three weeks ago was discharged only the day before yesterday."

"Ah, and why?"

"Why? There is but one reason Thy. The King made demands, and the Parliament made other demands. The Parliament would not do as it was told,

and the King would not do as the Parliament desired. So the King sent them about their business."

"Ay, well: what then? The King is King."

"Truly said; but the Parliament is Parliament."

"And therefore should do the King's bidding."

Master Throgmorton looked at Sir Faithful steadily. Then he replied slowly:

"Two men back the King."

"Ay. Who be they?"

"Have you not been in London of late, Sir Faithful?"

"It is many a day since I was there."

"Ay, for that matter, it is many a day since many a country gentleman was there up to three weeks ago, for the King hath governed the country himself for eleven years. But there be storms brewing. I speak no treason when I say that. But these two men of whom I spoke, and who back the King, be Wentworth or Strafford, whatever title he likes best, and the little priest, Laud."

"The great Archbishop?"

"The great Archbishop! Fiddlesticks! A vassal of Rome. A cat's-paw for that father of lies, the Pope. A little meddler, who desires to bring back the old days of Mary. A defamer of the Sabbath, a man who hath issued a decree that all sorts of May games shall be played on Sunday afternoons."

"Ay, but faithful to the King," said Sir Faithful.

"Just so far as it suits his own purposes."

"Well, better be governed by the King, even although he doth give Laud much rope, than by a lot of psalm-singing Puritans."

"There be Puritans and Puritans," replied Throgmorton. "Oh, yes, I am for the Church, although a

branch of my family supported Mary in the old days. Many of the Puritans whom Laud hath hounded out of the country were brave men and true. They were neither hot gospellers nor rowdies, but good God-fearing men. And this I do say, King or no King, Archbishop or no Archbishop, it is hard that an honest man should be driven across the seas because he wishes to say his prayers in his own fashion."

"But," said Sir Faithful, "if a man can say his prayers how and where he will, where is the use of an Archbishop?"

"Ay," said Master Throgmorton, "where?"

"No Bishop, no King," retorted Sir Faithful.

"So we have been told. So King James said, but what hath followed? What of Scotland, man? what of Scotland?"

"Ay, what of Scotland?" rejoined Sir Faithful. "What do you find there? Disloyalty to the King, and the country ruled by a crowd of sour-faced Jeremiahs, who call themselves Presbyterians."

"Ay, while the King hath played see-saw with them. Now he goes thither, and takes the Communion at the Presbyterian churches; and again he goes there with Laud to force upon them Episcopal government."

"Ay, and is not the King King?"

"And the people be people, and this Charles hath found; and so, in spite of them, the Scotch e'en have their own way."

"Ay, but I tell you this cannot be for long. The King must be King, and the Bishop must be Bishop, mind that. As for those who will not obey the great Archbishop, well—let them go. Saints alive, man,

what is a Bishop for but to tell people how to pray, and to govern the Church aright?"

"While the people must be like a flock of sheep. They must follow whither little Laud leads, and they must pay whatever fines the King chooses to inflict without even lifting a finger in protest. I tell you that Elizabeth, fiery of temper as she was, liking her own way as she did, never dared to take such a course."

"Then you be for the Parliament?"

"I be for law and order. I tell you Parliament must govern. We be not France, neither must Strafford be another Richelieu. As for little Laud, his nails must be pared."

"Ay," replied Sir Faithful, "but the knife which any man uses to pare the great Archbishop's nails will cut his own throat. Mind that."

"I am not so cocksure," retorted Master Throgmorton. "Why, what would you? This little priest is trying to do Stephen Gardiner over again. Only yesterday I met a well-behaved man with his nose slit. 'Holloa, my man,' I said, 'what's amiss with you?' 'It needs but one eye to see,' he made answer. 'Thy nose be slit,' I said; 'but why?' 'Ay,' he replied, 'that be Laud's work. I went not to church, but prayed according to conscience. So he forthwith gave orders that this should be done, and, I tell you, I suffered torments.' Only two months ago I met another man with his ears cropped close to his head. It was the same story. And there be many in England whom he hath served this way, and more whom he hath fined or sent to some stinking prison, all because they desired to worship God as their hearts dictated. But that be not all. The

King aideth and abetteth him, while he gives *quid pro quo* by maintaining at all hazards the King's authority."

"Ay, I see you be but a ranting Puritan," said Sir Faithful, with, as I thought, little show of argument and less reason.

"I be a man slow to anger, Sir Faithful," replied Master Throgmorton; "all the same, I be a man who speaks my mind. As for me, I go to church, as a man in my position should; but this I do say: if I wanted to pray as the Independents pray, then God-a-mercy, but neither Laud nor the King himself should force me otherwise. So there!"

"You dare not say that if Laud were here."

"Ay, and that I would. What happened in St. Cleer parish, where I live? When the order came out that every parson should read Laud's command that sports and pastimes should be indulged in on Sunday afternoons, what did Master Fairlight, our parson, do? He read the commandment of God, and then he read the commandment of Laud. 'My brethren,' he said, 'you have heard both commandments—that of God, and that of man. You can choose yourselves which you obey.' Master Fairlight was brought before Laud and taken to task. But I went with him, and I said this to the little priest: 'Master Laud,' I said, 'I can summon five hundred swords in twenty-four hours, and I can rouse half of Devon in a fortnight; and if you do aught to Master Fairlight, by Gad, I will.' Whereupon he pulled in his horns like a snail in the springtime, and became as mild as mother's milk. But he treated others differently. Many a holy man hath he ejected from his parish, and made hundreds

of good Churchmen Independents as a consequence. And I tell you this, where there is smoke there is fire; and, if I mistake not, unless King and Minister and priest mend their ways, great trouble will follow."

"This is treason!" cried Sir Faithful Fortescue.

"Nay, it is truth and soberness."

"What! Will the country fight against the King?"

"May Heaven forbid. All the same, let those who have the King's ear tell him what people be thinking, for if once England doth catch fire it will be a sad day for Charles Stuart."

At this I thought hotter words, and perchance blows, would follow; but at that moment Richard Gerry came to inform us that supper was ready, and as he opened the door the smell of hot viands came to us, which smell was so appetising and so savoury that they forgot their disputes in the desire for food. Even to this day I have little doubt but that the advent of supper averted what might have been a bloody quarrel.

Nevertheless, Sir Faithful was so incensed with Master Throgmorton that he would not join him and the others after supper, telling me in confidence that he had no patience to talk with a man whose speech so smacked of treason.

For myself, however, I could not help being impressed by what had been said. This was the first time I had heard the Parliamentary side put forth, for my father allowed no one to breathe a word against the King or his ministers. Neither did I up to this moment realise the sufferings of those who agreed not with Laud; nor yet did I, in truth, believe what Master Throgmorton had said. I felt sure that

these men of whom he spoke were naughty fellows, and that their naughtiness was the outcome of their disobedience to the Church. It is true we had taken our custom away from the Puritan shop-keepers in Launceston town, and had thus forced many of them to come to church again; but no one ever dreamed of slitting their noses or of cropping their ears.

However, I forgot these things presently, and fell into a deep sleep, from which I did not awake till six o' th' clock on the following morning.

"Let us away early," said Sir Faithful to me, "for these same men with whom we had speech last night be travelling towards London to-day, and I desire not their company."

So we got to saddle before eight o'clock on as fair a morning as ever I saw. The birds were singing gaily, while the waters of the river that runs by Exeter shone bright in the morning sun. On our way we passed by Exeter Cathedral, which, as I thought, was a mighty imposing structure, but I recked little of it, for my mind was far away, down in Cornwall, where the fairest maid in the world dwelt.

"There may be something in what he saith," burst out Sir Faithful Fortescue after a long silence.

"In what who saith?" I asked.

"That man Throgmorton. If the King hath dissolved Parliament after three weeks' sitting, it will mean trouble. All the more reason why we should be by the King's side. Let us forward, Roderick, and let no grass grow under our horses' feet."

The which we did, travelling right quickly, so that at the end of three days we drew near London town, nothing happening to us during all the journey. It is true we passed by many strange-looking people, who

I am sure were footpads, but we were seven strong, and as each man had his weapon ready for use, we made too good a show for them to attack us.

"Where go we first?" I asked, as presently I saw the waters of the great river on which London is built.

"For me, I have many affairs," replied Sir Faithful. "As for you, I have commands to take you to the Earl of Strafford with due speed."

I must confess that my heart beat loud and fast as I heard him speak, as indeed whose would not? For I was going into the presence of a man who not only had the King's confidence, but who, according to report, guided the King's actions and the King's speech.

"And shall I see him to-day?" I asked.

"That I know not. Yet must I take you to his dwelling in Whitehall, where I trust he will see me, and where you will await his pleasure."

"And how long may that be?"

Sir Faithful looked at me like a man astonished.

"Who knows?" he replied presently. "Perchance an hour, perchance a week. Think you that he would alter his plans to welcome thee?"

At this my heart sank, and for the first time I realised of how little importance I was. Nevertheless, I made a vow that I would show myself of such quality that my master should not only miss my absence, but seek my presence.

As we entered the house at Whitehall, Sir Faithful went straight towards a man who, as I thought, seemed of some quality, with whom he spoke freely.

"He is much engaged," I heard this man say, "and may not be disturbed."

"Yet have we come from Cornwall according to his will."

"I tell you, Sir Faithful, I may not go into his presence. Since four days ago he hath scarcely eaten or slept. The town be in an uproar, and disturbances be everywhere. Even the King is disturbed, and my Lord of Strafford hath all his work cut out to keep the peace. You saw the soldiers at every street corner?"

"Ay, but there was no fighting."

"No; but it is very near fighting. At present the Commons do nothing but meet together and talk. Some say they mean to raise an army; others, that they mean to oppose the King's will in other ways. Besides, you be early. My lord expected you not until to-morrow."

"This was my order," replied Sir Faithful, showing him a piece of parchment, whereupon the other read aloud, "The King's business requireth haste."

"Very well, Sir Faithful," said the man as he read, "I will e'en brave the anger of the lion in his den," whereupon he went away murmuring, but quickly returned with a look of wonderment upon his face.

"Your affairs must await until to-morrow, Sir Faithful," he said; "but he desires to see the lad forthwith."

"Without me?"

"Ay, without thee! He hath e'en dismissed many of standing that he may see this young fighting-cock at once."

Sir Faithful said not a word in reply, but walked away without even bidding me God-speed, while I, with a strange feeling around the calves of my legs, followed the man who had been speaking.

The corridors and stairs were filled with men, mostly gaily attired and of jaunty air; but none took

note of us, neither did any man show surprise when my companion took my arm.

"This meaneth something, my young bantam," he said, "or my name is not Bevil Lorimer. My Lord of Strafford would not dismiss courtiers to talk with the youngest son of a yokel like John Falkland, of Cornwall, were not something important stirring."

At this I made a brave face, as though I had expected to be made much of, while my companion went on:

"But mind thy manners, lad, for Wentworth is not a man to be trifled with. Take a bit of advice from one who hath watched him for years. Show not thyself as one wise, neither dare express an opinion unless thou art asked. On the other hand, be quick to understand what he saith, for he is of short temper. Reveal no cock-fighting airs to him, but neither be thou of a fearful face. Do not cringe, but answer him straight. The devil is not so black as he is painted. When thou art a man risen to a high place, remember what Bevil Lorimer told thee."

A minute later I was ushered into a large room, where, seated in an armchair, was a man far past middle life, who seemed in a deep reverie.

"Here is Master Roderick Falkland, my lord," quoth Master Bevil Lorimer.

He started up at this, and then, without speaking a word, looked at me steadily for well-nigh a minute. Presently he nodded to my companion, who silently left the apartment, leaving me alone with the terrible Earl of Strafford, who, men said, was nearly as wise as the great Cardinal Richelieu of France, and just as cruel.

CHAPTER IV

TELLS HOW I HAD SPEECH WITH THE GREAT EARL OF STRAFFORD, AND OF THE WORK HE HAD CHOSEN FOR ME

He continued to examine me after Master Bevil Lorimer had left us, and although for a moment I almost feared to look at him, I presently dared to lift my eyes to his face. Even then I could not help feeling that I stood in the presence of a stern, strong man. Moreover, I was impressed with the fact that he was one who would brook no interference or opposition. The stern-set mouth, the large prominent nose, the overhanging brows, the square jaw, all told me that here was one who determined to rule, and one who would have no mercy on rivals. For a moment I looked at him just as a boy, longing to achieve fame in battle, might look at such as Sir Richard Grenville. He became to me a sort of hero. And yet I could not say that my heart went out to him in love. He repelled and attracted me at the same time. I felt that I could serve him loyally and eagerly, and yet I feared him from the first. I seemed to grow smaller as I stood beside him, while never in my life had I felt my own unimportance as I felt it then.

Presently he turned away from me and took up a piece of paper from a table near.

"Roderick Falkland. That's your name?"

I bowed.

"Ay, speak, lad. Thou hast a tongue, I suppose?"

His voice was harsh and of coarse texture; moreover, he spoke with an accent strange to me, but which I afterwards learned was common enough in Yorkshire. Its very roughness, however, impressed me, and made me feel more than ever the strength of the man.

"My name is Roderick Falkland," I said.

"Youngest son of Sir John Falkland, who lives close by Launceston town in Cornwall?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Your father is in some way related to Lord Falkland, who hath favour with the King?"

"Own cousin, my lord."

"Tush, lad. Cousin stands for aught or naught. He is related, therefore thou art of gentle birth."

"Yes, my lord."

"On both sides?"

"My mother's name was Trecarrel. That is one of the oldest names in my county," I replied a little proudly.

"And what be you fit for?"

"I know not; I have not been tried."

"And yet thou wouldst call thyself a man, I ween?"

"I was twenty-one the day before I left Cornwall."

For the first time he smiled, and on his face came the first look of kindness I had yet seen. Nevertheless, the smile was wintry, and almost piteous.

"Twenty-one," he said presently—"twenty-one! A time of dreams and visions and fancies. A time,

too, when all things seem rosy and naught seems impossible."

I did not answer him, for in truth there seemed no reason.

"Thy father is a loyal servant of the King?"

"Yes, my lord."

"What proof is there of that?"

"That you have sent for his youngest son," I made answer.

He turned on me sharply at this, and his huge, bushy, reddish eyebrows seemed to bristle.

"But thou," he said sternly—"art thou loyal?"

"I trust so, my lord."

"Trust so—trust so! But let us be sure. Can the King do wrong?"

"Since he is appointed by God to be King, how can he?"

"That is thy belief?"

"Yes, my lord."

"But if the King seemeth to do wrong? What if half a nation proclaimeth on the housetops that he doeth wrong, what then?"

"Since God can do no wrong, how can the King, whom He guideth, do wrong?"

"Therefore?"

"The King must be King," I said, repeating my father's favourite maxim.

Again he looked at me steadily, as though he would look into my very soul.

"Then what of the man who thinketh of plans to thwart the King's purposes? What of the man who would lift his voice to proclaim aught against the King's will?"

"Such would be a traitor, my lord," I replied after

a moment's thought, and wondering all the while why he spoke to me in such a way.

"And as such should die? Is not that so?"

"Must not that depend on the King's will and the King's mercy?" I asked.

"But if the King said it was right for him to die, it would be right, eh?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Then would the King's will make a wrong thing right?"

I had almost said yes, but something, as it seemed to me at the back of my mind, bid me be silent.

"Come, speak out."

"If the King be the instrument of God, there would no need to make the wrong thing right, since he would not do the wrong thing," I made answer.

"Therefore, should the King will to behead thy father for the good of the State, he would do right?"

"The King could not do it," I replied, wondering at the strange catechism through which he was putting me.

"No? And why?"

"He could not do it, any more than he could cut off the hand by which he held the sword that defended him. It would be just the same as if he plucked out his eyes."

He laughed a great laugh. There was no gladness in it, although there was amusement. For a moment I thought he was mocking me, but before I could fully realise what he meant, he went on:

"And thou, young bantam, thou thinkest that thou art thy father's son?"

"It is my one great hope in life to be as worthy as he," I replied earnestly.

At this he turned upon me like a man in anger.

"Well, thou shalt have a chance to prove it," he said. "Art weary?"

"Of what, my lord?"

"Thou hast journeyed from afar. Art thou weary in body?"

"I have not thought of it."

"Ah, well, I allow no idle strutting knaves around me. I will have no be-curled, wine-drinking coxcombs who have neither wit nor wisdom, sincerity nor valour. Thou hast only but just come into London town, and thou hast heard but little of me, but thou wilt hear much about me presently. Ay, thou wilt," and there was, I thought, a touch of vanity in his mode of speech. "One thing thou wilt hear is, that I read men like books. Well, let me tell thee this: I read men better than I read books. In these ten minutes have I looked into thy soul, and men will tell thee that when Thomas Wentworth taketh the trouble to do that, it means either the weal or the woe of the man he reads. Well, remember this, if thou in aught dost dare to turn aside from the path I mark out, even if it be but in thought and fancy, ay, to the extent of one hair's breadth, I shall know it. And remember this too: I know naught of mercy when a man faileth me."

"The man who is faithful desires not mercy, my lord," I replied, my heart becoming hard.

"What then?"

"Only justice," I made answer.

Again he laughed mockingly, while I felt the blood rush to my face, for although he said he could read my heart, I knew naught of his.

"Nay, nay," he said, seeing the angry blood rise to

my face, "I do not mock thee. Thou art not a fool, and thou hast an Englishman's blood in thy veins, else would not I have spent all this time with thee. Look 'ee, Master Roderick Falkland: I have decided to give thee work to do, and that with all speed. Ay, men blame me for using strange means for accomplishing my purposes; they say I work in ways unknown to them. Well, what would they? I am no gaily attired coxcomb like Buckingham, who thought more of his loves abroad and at home, and his gay attire, than of his country's weal. I am not one who would run my country into war for the sake of a Queen's smile. But what of that? I work in my own way, and I have my way. Ay, you strutting, gaily-dressed peacocks"—here he shook his fist at the window facing Whitehall—"*I have my way!* And I am going to use you—you, young Roderick Falkland, you whose face is smooth, and whose beard hath hardly begun to appear—I am going to use you, I say, to do the King's work. And remember—great God! if you in aught fail to do my will, I will wring your neck, as I have seen a country wench wring the neck of a young cock in a Yorkshire farmyard!"

"I can obey your commands, my lord," I made reply; "but I cannot make others obey them."

"I am just, if I am cruel," he replied. "Remember, I hate weakness. I can do with a swashbuckler, I can even do with a psalm-singing Puritan, but weakness—no, I cannot have patience with that. Now then, listen. It was only an hour since that I thought of you for the work I have in my mind. I had thought of you for—but that matters not. Suddenly I determined to see if you were fool enough,

yet wise enough, inexperienced enough, yet having sufficient judgment, to go upon the mission I shall send you. Be flattered, young Roderick Falkland, that I choose you rather than some maundering old schemer, who ever walketh in beaten paths, in spite of his scheming, to do my work."

At this he looked at me again as if doubtful, but presently went on:

"London is in an uproar. It is divided against itself. For that matter, England is also so divided. But what of that? Yelping dogs must be quieted—they must also be made to obey. You noted the uproar as you came through the streets?"

"I noted that many seemed strangely angry."

"Ay, the King summoned the Parliament, and the Parliament was insolent, therefore the King sent the members thereof about their business. This much I had better tell thee, that thou mayest understand. Well now, certain of them, two in particular named Hampden and Pym, be leading a rebellion. Understand?"

"I think I understand."

"At bottom, the difficulty is about religion. Ay, think of it, Roderick Falkland: most of the throat-cutting in the world has been about religion. Ah, but here is the situation," and now he seemed to be talking to himself rather than to me. "There be three parties in this religious business—three. There is first the Church, which moves according to what the Archbishop saith. That must be upheld. Laud's schemes must be advanced. No Bishop, no King, mind that. 'God's silly vassal' had enough sense to see that. Then there be the Presbyterians, who want to make their form of government supreme. Dost see?

They be growing in numbers and in influence—for the Scotch be—— But there, enough of that. They by themselves can do naught. But there be a third party, which is of strange colour. This other party is of an Independent order. I love them not, and yet they have strong men. They desire that every man shall believe as he please and pray as he please; but they love not the Presbyterians, although they seem to be united. Now then, what must be done? Ah, the others see it not; they see it not, blind, blind that they be." And here I believe he forgot my presence altogether. "If they can be led to believe that Presbyterianism will be worse for them than Laud's rule, then can I use them for my own purpose, and then shall the King be more firmly established upon the throne than ever. Now then, how can this be, but by—— Ah! come, Roderick Falkland."

"Yes, my lord—whither?"

He looked at me angrily, but made no other answer than to strike a thing on the table which made a peculiar noise.

A servant appeared almost before the echo died away.

"Horses," said Lord Strafford.

"And guard, my lord?"

"Guard! No, it is now dark. Two horses—one for myself and one for this youth. And hark'ee, tell no one for whom they be; and more, tell no one that I have left this room. If any man calls, tell him I cannot be disturbed. But no—wait. Give not the order. We remain—we remain. I have altered my mind. Keep a silent tongue; and remember, no one enters this room. I am here, engaged. That is the answer to all inquirers."

The servant made obeisance and left, while I stood looking at him in wonder.

Without paying me any further notice, he went to a closet, from which he took two long cloaks and two hats, which were large enough to hide the face of any man who might wear them.

"Put on these," he said, pointing to one of the cloaks and throwing a huge hat before me.

Silently I obeyed him, but I asked no question.

"You wear a sword. Can you use it?"

"My father said I was an apt pupil in swordcraft," I replied.

"Ah, that is well. John Falkland is a good swordsman. And thy pistols—be they fit for use?"

"Yes, my lord."

"That is well. Follow."

He walked to the wall, which was panelled, and pressed hard upon a place that seemed to me like a knot in the wood. As he did so the wall seemed to move, and a moment later I saw an opening big enough for a man to pass. He slipped through the aperture, and was lost in the darkness. In another instant I was by his side again, and I heard the panel move into its original position.

"Keep close to me," he said.

I soon found that I was descending some stone stairs, which ended in what appeared to be a dark corridor. This we followed for some distance, my companion speaking never a word.

This course of action was so unthought of by me that for a time I seemed to be in a dream, especially as no ray of light penetrated the darkness anywhere. Then presently, when I began to realise where I was, I came very near to feeling fear, for although danger

troubled me not one whit when I could see my adversary, I liked not the thought of being in such pitch-darkness, even although near me was, excepting the King, the most powerful man in the kingdom.

For a time I heard his steps in front of me although he spoke not, and when at length the darkness of the place seemed to have entered my very heart, I much desired to hear the sound of his voice.

"My lord," I said.

But no answer came, whereupon I continued to stumble on in the darkness.

"My lord," I repeated again, but no reply did I hear; whereupon I stopped short and listened.

The sound of his footsteps had ceased. The place was as silent as death.

"My lord," I repeated again, "are you there?"

Again I heard nothing save my own voice, which sounded strangely in the silence and the darkness. I stood still, my heart seeming to grow cold within me, for it seemed like the very home of death, and at that time I could readily have believed that I saw many hideous things grinning at me in the darkness.

"If you have brought me here to mock me, my lord, ay, and to lead me into this hole only to desert me, it is scarce worthy of the King's Minister," I said angrily.

But again I heard nothing, save a kind of echo to my own voice, which, as it resounded through the passage, or whatever it was, presently seemed to become a kind of wail.

Upon this I considered carefully, and in order to keep my courage up I uttered my thoughts as they came into my mind; for when a man is alone in the

darkness, his voice is, as every man who hath been reared in the country knows, a kind of company.

"I must have missed him," I said. "There must be somewhere another passage branching off from this, the which he hath followed without noticing that I was not near. Perchance he was much too occupied by the many disturbances in the country to pay heed to me. Therefore my plan is to return, open the panel, and wait in his apartment until he shall come and find me."

This I was about to attempt, when a mocking voice close beside me said:

"Well reasoned, Master Roderick Falkland, but it is not my will that you should return."

"My lord!" I cried.

"Ay, I did but take means to see whether thou wert a scare-brained fool, who would lose his head at the first difficulty. Thou art not a fool, young Cornishman, neither art thou a coward."

"Where were you?" I asked, like one dazed.

"Only in an alcove cut out in the side of the passage. But let us hasten on. I like this darkness no more than thou."

His voice, as I thought, sounded kinder than when I had heard it before; but perhaps this was because any man's voice would sound pleasant to me after my belief that I was left alone in the darkness. Moreover, I was pleased that I had passed through my ordeal so well—as indeed who would not? For although it may seem to those who read this as a little matter, it was grim and real enough to me at the time.

After a few minutes we came to what I gathered to be the end of the gloomy place, for we presently

ascended some steps again, and ere long I heard my Lord of Strafford fumbling with something that had a clinking sound. A little later we had entered a silent, gloomy apartment, which was lit by a single candle. But he stayed not here; for presently, after passing through two rooms and a long corridor, I found myself in the open air.

"Where be we, my lord?" I asked.

For answer he pointed to the towers of a great building which Sir Faithful Fortescue had pointed out to me as Westminster Abbey.

Near by we heard the sound of voices, whereupon Lord Strafford stopped and listened; but we could make little out, for the voices were confused, owing to so many speaking at the same time. Nevertheless, I did hear one man say, "It is Strafford and Laud who are the traitors. That should be the first business of Parliament—to deal with those two men."

"Ay," said another, "their heads should come off."

At this my companion laughed grimly.

"I tell you many of *their* heads shall come off, Roderick Falkland," he said. "Nevertheless, it is well we rode not through the streets on horseback."

A little later we reached the river, where Lord Strafford gave a low whistle. This was soon followed by a splashing of oars, and in a few moments a boat touched the banks.

"Whither?" said the boatman.

"Church and State," replied Strafford, and with that he pointed to the boat as if to command me to embark, the which I did, whereupon he placed himself by my side and gave a sign to the boatman.

The night was dark, and the sky, which had been

fine and clear, had now become cloudy. Scarce a single light did I see on the river's banks, while the surging of the waters sounded gloomy and sullen.

Neither of us spoke a word, and the boatman rowed as though by clockwork, so regular and measured were his strokes.

Presently we reached the other bank of the river, and near us I saw a large dark building.

"You wonder whither we go?" said Strafford, as we left the boat.

"Ay, my lord."

"Yonder is Lambeth Palace," he said.

"The place where the great Archbishop resides?"

"Ay," and then he laughed as though something had made him merry. "It seemeth a great thing that you should speak with the Archbishop of Canterbury?" he said.

"Yes, my lord," I replied.

"Yet in three minutes from now you will stand face to face with him," he said. "I wonder what plans are inside that old grey head."

At this I spoke no word, for although he was the greatest man in England, save the King, it seemed strange to me that even he could speak lightly of the great Archbishop, concerning whom I had heard so many things.

CHAPTER V

TELLS HOW I ENTERED LAMBETH PALACE, AND HEARD CONVERSE BETWEEN THE EARL OF STRAFFORD AND THE GREAT ARCHBISHOP LAUD

SINCE my twenty-first birthday, when my father had told me that I was to enter the service of the great Earl of Strafford, I had, as may be imagined, dreamed many dreams concerning the experiences I should have when I had fairly entered upon my duties. But never, in the wildest of those dreams, did I imagine that before I had been in London three hours I should be in the midst of intrigue and mystery. For such I felt was the case. What was the meaning of that journey underground? To whom belonged the lonely, silent house into which we had entered after our sojourn in the darkness? Ay, and what was of more importance than all the rest, what was the work he wished me to do?

For, boy of twenty-one though I was, and having a full sense of my own importance, as every youth hath, or he will not do much in the world, I could not help feeling that it was no common thing to send such as I on important work. I knew naught of London, and as little of those questions which were rousing the whole country. Why, then, should the great Earl of Strafford conduct me silently and

secretly to the house of the great Archbishop, and tell me in unmistakable terms that he intended me for work of so important a nature?

As I thought of this my brain well-nigh reeled, while my heart beat within me so uncomfortably that when I tried to speak I found a difficulty in controlling my voice.

Still I pushed on eagerly, for, in spite of my many thoughts, I feared no danger; nay, more, I delighted myself in the fact that I was not to remain in London as a mere lackey, writing my lord's messages and running on his errands.

We presently entered an open space which well-nigh surrounded the Archbishop's palace. This we crossed without observation, and presently came to a small iron-studded door, which was nearly hidden in an angle of the building. We did not wait there long; before one could well count ten the door opened, and a man who looked to me like a priest appeared, holding a candle in his hand.

Strafford spoke no word, but followed this man, who, on seeing him, led the way in silence. A minute later we stood within a somewhat low-ceiled room, around the walls of which was placed a great array of books, numbering, as I thought, many thousands. The apartment was very dimly lighted—in truth, so dark was it, that at first I could see no one; but presently I saw, sitting by a table, and near to a candle which flickered feebly, a white-haired man. But he was not such as I expected to see. His hair and beard, instead of being long and flowing, were closely cropped, the latter being trimmed after the fashion of a French dandy, rather than

in a way becoming the prelate of the English Church.

As far as I could judge he had been writing, for some pieces of parchment lay open before him, while close by them lay several goose quills. At the end of the room, as I saw presently, was a quaintly carved oak chimney-piece, while a fire smouldered in the fireplace.

"Ah, Strafford," he said, on rising, "it is you, and I have forgotten the fire. I have had much to do, much to do. The night grows cold, although the summer will soon be here; so, my son"—and he turned to the man who had opened the door to us—"let us have dry wood with all speed, and if we cannot get a blaze otherwise, pour a little oil on the wood."

While the man was doing this I was better able to get a view of him. He was taller than his sitting posture suggested, but was of no great height. He stooped somewhat at the shoulders, and moved in an uncertain way. So much so that I marvelled. "This," I thought, "can never be the great Archbishop whose power hath driven thousands of our countrymen across the seas, and altered the whole condition of the Church at home." At that time, however, I had never seen his eyes, neither did I know what was after revealed to me.

"You may go now," he continued, when the man had obeyed his orders. "But stay. We shall need something comforting, so prepare a pleasant drink without delay."

Upon this he turned upon me, and now that my eyes had grown used to the light I could see him plainly.

"Whom have we here, my Lord Strafford?" he said, and I noticed a somewhat metallic ring in his voice.

"This, your Grace, is Master Roderick Falkland, who hath come to London to render me what service I may command him."

"He hath a good name."

"Ay, and something better."

"What?"

"That I will tell you presently. Meanwhile, I am somewhat chilly, for it was cold on the river, and so what we have to say shall be said by the side of this brightsome fire, if it so please you."

But the great Archbishop seemed to pay but little heed to Strafford's words—rather, he examined me closely. Not sternly and of ostentatious purpose, as had happened to me before, but, as I thought, almost furtively. Even when I went to him and made my obeisance he seemed to be trying to read me, rather than to pay heed to the homage I paid him. And this was unusual with him, for I have been told since that he laid great stress on such matters, and demanded a homage similar to that which was paid in the old days to men like Cardinal Wolsey and Cardinal Pole.

"Roderick Falkland can hear all I wish to say to you," said Strafford.

"But perchance not all I may wish to say to you."

I almost started at his words, for his manner had entirely changed. Nay, there was a sound almost like a snarl in his mode of speech, and there came into my mind the belief that he was not well pleased with me.

Still, he drew near to the fire, and then I noticed

that he wore red slippers as though he were a cardinal. Moreover, he picked up a cap, which was also red, from the table, and, as he put it on his head, I could not help being reminded of the cardinals I had seen in pictures.

Strafford also noticed this, and laughed.

"My Lord Cardinal," he said.

"Nay, nay. I do not desire that, in spite of what hath passed. But to your affairs, noble earl."

"My affairs? nay, yours, your Grace, for, by Heaven, if these fellows have their way it will go hard with you."

"I have no fear. I fought not my own battle, but the battle of religion. God hath revealed His will to me, and I seek to do it, that is all. But listen, Strafford, is this young springald to hear what we say?"

"For that purpose I have brought him hither."

"Be wise. Thine indiscretions have often placed weapons in the hands of those who wish thee not well."

"Indiscretions! And who speaketh of them? A set of grinning jackanapes. Peacocks, who think of naught but fine attire; wine-bibbing old fools, who can never think outside a beaten track, and who cannot understand a man who can mark out a line for himself. Indiscretions! Ay, thoroughness is my indiscretion. And that the world hath seen. They have seen it in Ireland, and in Scotland, ay, and in England too. I have made the King king! Ay, and he shall remain king too, in spite of the clamour of these Presbyterians."

I noticed that he paid no respect to the Archbishop; rather, he seemed to regard him much as he regarded me, as a tool to carry out his designs. It, moreover,

appeared to me that the great Churchman resented this behaviour, and was even then mentally battling with them.

"I tell you," went on Strafford, "I have already thought out my plans. When I have laid them before you, you will then be able to judge whether I have thought with diligence and wisdom."

At that moment the man came in with liquors, the which Strafford drank deeply, while Laud only sipped at intervals. When the man had gone again, my new master went on:

"Here is the case, William Laud. Nay, look not sourly at me, man. I tell you I have tested the boy. He will be as silent as death, and as faithful as a dog. I am not a fool, and I do not read men for naught. Besides, it is well he should hear."

The Archbishop looked at me again. "Well, go on, but lay no blame on me afterwards," he said, almost peevishly, I thought.

"I am not a man who fears the consequences of his deeds, and I take all responsibility," he replied, and his voice became harsh and stern, while his northern mode of speech became more strongly marked.

"Now then, Laud, how do matters stand? Here be your plans. You be first and foremost a Churchman. For this reason you have tried to bring back the ritual of Rome; you have laboured to bring back the Church to the ways of those times before King Harry broke over the traces. You want uniformity in religion; you desire that every man shall sing to the tune of your setting, and pray according to your will. In order to accomplish that you have defied the will of the Puritans; you have driven them by the thousand out of the country; you have ejected hundreds of

parsons who are not of your way of thinking; you have made bishops of those who follow your lead. Nay, interrupt me not. I know you would say that you do it for the glory of God. Philip of Spain, and Mary—Bloody Mary, as the Puritans call her—said the same thing. You have not gone quite so far as they; but you have gone as far as you could. You have slit noses, cropped ears, and in other ways disfigured those who will not say ditto to your words. You have branded men, and you have imprisoned them, and so far you have had your own way. But mind, a great part of the country is growling. Now, then, I have supported you, because your plans have not conflicted with mine. I have advised the King, and he hath supported you. Why? Because I am a king's man—I believe that the King should be king; and because the crown and the prelacy stand or fall together. Let my enemies say that I thereby advance my own cause if they will, but there is the fact. The King shall be king, and not a shadow of one. His Majesty sees, as I see, that this cannot be save by the Episcopal form of Church government. No Bishop, no King, said 'God's silly vassal.' His son says the same. That is why we have yielded to your vagaries. We have given you rope, because by that means we link the people to the crown. Let the Presbyterians rule, or let the Independents rule, and the King becomes only a name.

"You know how I have laboured to establish the King on his throne. For that reason I have supported the levy of those taxes which the people have hated; for that reason I have advised the King not to listen to the growling of the Parliamentarians, and, to do him justice, I have advised him according to his will.

"Now, then, what hath come to pass?" And here Lord Strafford started up and began to walk around the room.

"This hath come to pass. The people hate you, and they hate me. Oh, we gain naught by hiding our heads in the sand. They hate us. But three nights since they would have mobbed you had you not hidden yourself. They hate you for trying to bring back Popish ways; they hate me for supporting the King in what they call injustice. Half the nation, or nearly so, call us both tyrants—tyrants!" Here Strafford laughed as though the thought amused him. "But, my lord Archbishop, this hath its serious side. If the Independents—who, although they seem comparatively few, and mainly of the lower orders, be yet strong, brave men—unite with the Presbyterians, the devil will have a big reckoning."

"Tah!" said the Archbishop. "They will not fight, or even if they band themselves together to do battle, they will run like sheep at the first sight of the King's standard."

"No, by God, no, they will not," cried Strafford. "Shall I tell you why? They be Englishmen, and they be Englishmen with a cause. Nay, scowl not, they have a cause. Thou hast played the part of Stephen Gardiner, and, I tell thee, thy name stinks in their nostrils. As for me, no, I am not loved. No man knoweth it better."

"Well, what is thy counsel?"

"This, William Laud. We must divide this Puritan camp. There is no other hope. We must set Presbyterian against Independent, and then we must make it be profitable to one of them to side with us!"

"Ah!"

The Archbishop started like a man who had been stung. His eyes darted fire, his features worked, his form seemed instinct with new life.

"Eh, stare at me, man; but what dost thou think of it?"

"Let me consider," said the Churchman; "let me consider."

He walked twice the whole length of the room, and then returned.

"Tell me the other things that be in thy mind," he said.

"That is quickly done. The Presbyterians will never come over on our side. The Scotch—ah, I have not patience when I speak of them; but they be Presbyterians, and those who side with them have a system of government for their Church, and thus of the State, that we cannot do away with."

"And the Independents be a fanatical, sour-faced, dry-as-dust, psalm-singing, unruly crew."

"And thou, William Laud, Father in God, art as cunning as the devil, and can drive as hard a bargain."

I believe the two men had forgotten me, for the great Archbishop had ceased to regard me with furtive glances, while Strafford seemed so absorbed in his plans that I was no more heeded than his sheathed sword, which he had unbuckled and placed by his side.

"Then—then——"

"Ah, you see. We must get these Independents on our side. We must see that they understand that the Presbyterians scorn them more than we do, and we must make them believe that, will they support us, certain concessions shall be made to them which shall grant them a certain liberty of worship and of creed.

Then, when the trouble is at an end, when the dogs have ceased snarling, then thou canst lead them into the paths of truth."

"Ah!"

Again the Archbishop went the length of the room and returned, and as he came back I saw that his eyes burned like live coals, while his hands trembled as if with excitement.

"Eh, but, Strafford, have you thought how to win the Independents? I have been thinking on other lines, and—and——"

"Ay, and yet you mistrust me! You talk of my indiscretions! Tah! But there! a Churchman can see only through his own spectacles. But I have thought. Yes, I know what you would say. Hampden is hopeless, so is Pym. True; but there is another man who, although the King and Lords know him not, hath gained great influence. A sour-faced Independent, if you will, a man with a wart on his nose, and a rough manner of speech; but still a strong man. I have inquired diligently, and I find that he can raise an army. He talketh in that manner of speech which the people love. He loveth not the Presbyterians, and he hath grave doubts concerning them. He believeth that Presbyterian tyranny is as bad as thine. He heads the Independents, and those who have sympathy with the fools who be that way of thinking. Now, then, William Laud, gain that man, and we be safe."

"His name?" asked Laud eagerly.

"Oliver Cromwell."

"I think I have heard his name."

"Yes. He hath spoken in the Commons but little, nevertheless his words carry much weight. His

speech is much intermingled with Scripture, and he prateth much of conscience, and the word of the Lord. That kind of man can always be dealt with, ay, he can nearly always be bought. Now then, what think you? I can see that thy brain is working."

"But he is not a fool, and he will naturally hate me, because I have had no sympathy with these fanatics. He would suspect any man whom I might send. Besides, I cannot bring myself to make the Independents any promises. How can I? Am I not placed at the head of the Church here in England? Is it not for me to command, and for the people to obey? How, then, can I say to these people, 'Support the King, support the Church, and thou shalt have liberty to pray as thou wilt'? For they shall NOT have liberty to pray as they will. There shall be one fold, and one Shepherd. I will have one Church, and one people. Already I have done much to make this a reality, and I will do more. All, all, Thomas Wentworth, shall obey the overseers of God."

"Ay, and the overseer in chief, William Laud in particular," interrupted Strafford, with a loud, mocking laugh.

"Yes, and William Laud in particular," repeated the Archbishop. "Oh, I make no secret of my plans. Obedience must be made to the prelate of the Church. Thus, if kindness will not bring this to pass, force shall be used. You accuse me of splitting noses, cropping ears, branding foreheads, and imprisoning. Yes, this I have done, and more; ay, and I will do more still. The Church must be supreme, and its Bishops——"

"Masters of the King," sneered Strafford.

"I said not that, Thomas Wentworth. It may be that the time will come when we shall be again united to Rome, but that time is not yet. Because of that I refused the Cardinal's hat which the Holy Father offered me. Perhaps, had I been twenty years younger, there might have been a chance for me to wear it. Oh yes, sneer if you will; it might have been possible, and this not for my own sake, but for the glory of God. It hath been said of you that you stand for 'thoroughness,' and this you admit, for 'thorough' is your watchword. I, on the other hand, stand for 'uniformity,' and this I will have, if God spares my life."

"But the present, the present," said Strafford impatiently.

"Yes, I see that there is need of action, and your plan savours of much worldly wisdom."

"If we can get the Independents to resist the Presbyterians, prelacy is safe, and the monarchy is safe."

"And for this purpose you would send some one to this Oliver Cromwell with—with messages."

"Ay."

"But whom would you send? If one of the King's supporters go to this sour-faced Puritan he would be——"

"Sent about his business. Exactly."

"Then whom would you send?"

"Roderick Falkland."

The Archbishop turned towards me again. He seemingly awoke to the fact of my presence.

"And why him?"

"Look at him, William Laud. A barefaced boy, just twenty-one. Fair curling hair he hath, and blue

eyes. He looks as innocent as a maid, and yet he hath thews and sinews like a young Hercules. His heart is tender; he believes implicitly in the Monarchy. A king can do no wrong, because the King is the Lord's anointed. He hath been sent hither by his father with but one thought in his mind—to serve the King, to support the Monarchy. Cromwell, I say, will receive such a messenger, when he would refuse to listen even to this youth's namesake, Lord Falkland."

"Yes, yes, I see; but——"

"Wait a moment, William Laud. Enough hath been said to-night, perchance too much. This we be both agreed upon: the King and the Church be in danger, and both must be saved. This is the only way it can be done. Therefore must thou even this night write such a letter as hath already been born in thy mind, and this youth must return again in the morning to receive thine instructions. For—mark this well—when Cromwell hath read thy letter, he will ask the youth many questions."

"And if the youth tells him what he hath heard me say this very night, this fanatical Puritan will be more embittered against me than ever."

"That was said in thine impatience and in thine anger. When thou hast considered well the whole matter, thou wilt be able to promise enough to make every Independent in the land support the King. I also shall have many things to say to him, and he shall also be the bearer of the King's own word—the Royal Word of Charles."

This he said in a strangely solemn manner, and as he spoke I saw a change come over the Archbishop's face.

"Before I leave thee," went on Strafford, "I would

e'en see thy private chapel which thou hast so altered to suit thy views. Roderick Falkland, do thou await our return."

With that they left the compartment, leaving me with my head all in a whirl. I tried hard to comprehend all that had been said, but although it all seemeth plain to me now, it was at that time a great mystery. In truth, many dark sayings were uttered which I have not here set down, because their purport was so unknown to me that I cannot even now write with knowledge. For that matter, it may be that I have set down their speech in the light of what afterwards took place, rather than in their own words (hard as I have tried to remember them), for I was much bewildered at the time.

In less than a quarter of an hour they returned, and I thought the Archbishop treated me with more kindness, for he gave me his blessing, and with such great earnestness did he beseech me to obey God, the King, and the Church, that I promised to do so with much eagerness of speech, and with a full heart.

"You return hither to-morrow morning alone," said my new master to me as we crossed the river, "and remember, Master Roderick Falkland, that if you be successful you will be the instrument which God hath used to save the country."

That night I slept in the lonely house into which we had come after we had passed through the dark passage, and dreamt of the meeting which was to take place on the following day, between myself and the great Archbishop.

CHAPTER VI

HOW I FIRST SAW MASTER OLIVER CROMWELL

THE clocks were striking nine, as the next morning, I drew near to the Archbishop's house a second time. I could not tell why, but it seemed to me as though I had been in London a year instead of less than a day. My meeting under the trees in the wood near my home with Rosiland Verona seemed far away; the journey from Launceston town to Whitehall came back to me only as a dream. Everything was changed by my meeting with the two great men who had been, under the King, ruling England. Still, I could not help remembering the words which my father and mother and Rosiland had said to me. "The King, right or wrong, always the King," my father had urged upon me again and again. "Never come back to me if you be in aught unfaithful to the King and Church." So said Rosiland both in speech and in the letter I had placed over my heart. And was not, I reflected, my mother's advice of the same nature? "Follow the gleam of God and conscience," she had said, and I could not do that unless I obeyed the man who was anointed by God to rule the nation for Him.

It was with this in my mind that I had listened to

the words of the great Earl who had spoken to me before I left his house that morning. I could not understand much of what he said; nay I feared him much, for his stern strength seemed to throw a shadow over my life. Nevertheless, I never in aught questioned the wisdom of his words. He was my master, even as the King was his master, and I would obey him, as a dog might obey the man who owned him. Enough for me to know that I was to go to a fanatical Puritan called Oliver Cromwell, taking to him letters and bearing messages. It is true I still wondered at my master's choice of a messenger, yet was I also highly pleased, as indeed who would not be?

The Archbishop received me in the room where I had first seen him. He seemed much occupied when I presented myself before him, but he left his work and turned to me. To my suprise he began by asking me about my father and my home, and the state of affairs in that part of the country, and when I had answered his questions he seemed greatly pleased, and told me of my duty to obey such a father.

"God can never prosper disobedient children, my son," he said, "for obedience is laid upon us all as the chief virtue. We must all obey, it is God's will. 'Children, obey your parents;' 'Slaves, obey your masters;' 'Wives, obey your husbands;' so said the great apostle. And this is also true in other matters. Every man is a child of the Church and the Throne, therefore must every one obey the Church and the Throne. And these two are indissolubly one, so that he who obeys one obeys also the other. But the great principle doth not end here. The Church and the Throne obey God, by Whom both are appointed, and to Whom both are responsible."

There was a touch of tenderness in his voice, and so kindly did he look at me that my heart became more warm towards him. Not that my affection for him was great, for, youth though I was, I fell to trying to understand the kind of man he was. And this was how I made him out. Not so great a man as Lord Strafford, and yet greater. It seemed to me as though he did not grasp great issues, and that he thought on narrow lines. In this sense he seemed a little man, with little aims and small projects. As I afterwards found, he spent much time and thought on paltry details, both as to the arrangements of tables, of crosses in churches, and of the kind of vestments a clergyman should wear. Moreover, he grew angry with those who agreed not with him. In all this he was inferior to Lord Strafford, who had great schemes and far-reaching plans. And yet he was greater than Strafford, because he was a man of more conscience, and tried to do all things to the glory of God. He would, I believe, have sent his own child to the stake, had he one, if that child obeyed not the Church, which he believed expressed the mind of God.

Presently he fell to telling me of the danger the nation was in through the naughtiness of men, and how God would bless all those who were faithful.

"We are commanded to be wise as serpents and as harmless as doves," he went on; "therefore must we use wise measures to win men to the truth. These Independents sin through ignorance of the truth, therefore must they be won to the truth by such means as God hath given to us. Since yesterday I have thought long and much on these things, and now can I see that we must be kind to them, that they

have time for repentance. Therefore do thou go to this man Oliver Cromwell, and tell him that I love all my children, and that my only desire is for the well-being of all the people and the glory of God. Moreover, I would do honour to those who support the Throne, and I can promise in the King's name, not only His Majesty's smile, but honour and riches. These people be used only as the cat's-paw of the Presbyterians, who be but an ungodly crew, not belonging at all to the true Church of our Lord, seeing they have disobeyed His commandments, and despised her ordinances."

These and many other things of a similar nature did he tell me, and in such a way that I did not wonder that my father believed in him. Moreover, my heart was all on fire for the King, therefore did I promise to bear in mind all he had told me.

"And now go," he said.

"Whither, your Grace?" I asked.

"Ah, hath not my Lord Strafford told you? The house of this man Oliver Cromwell is situated in the town of Ely."

"Is he of gentle blood?" I asked.

"Ay," said the great Archbishop, "he is of gentle blood, and even claimeth to have Royal blood in his veins. This I have discovered since yesternight. He is well married, too, to a gentlewoman of good family, and hath a family of his own. He sat in the Parliament which has just been dismissed for Cambridge, and it is through this that my Lord Strafford hath become acquainted with him. He is, I am told, plain of speech and of rough manners. Moreover, I am told reports differ about him. Some have it that he is a man who seeketh his own ends under the guise

of piety, that he useth holy words to gain his ends. Others, again, have it that he is honest and of sound heart. I am inclined to the former opinion, because how can he, if he be honest and a follower of God, think of opposing the will of the Church? But thou hast naught to do with that. It is for thee to do my bidding, and to remember all the words I have spoken."

"Am I to go alone?" I asked.

"Ay, alone. Not even a servant shalt thou take. And remember this, Master Roderick Falkland, if thou dost in aught prove unfaithful, the curse of God shall rest upon thee."

After he had spoken many other words of this order I rose to leave his presence, whereupon he said:

"To-night thou must sleep in Cambridge town, and to-morrow morn at this hour thou must be at Ely in the house of this same Oliver Cromwell."

I took the letters he gave me, and before noon I was well out of London town, travelling at a good speed towards Cambridge. I would have liked well to have remained in London for a few hours, for I saw that the town was all agog with excitement. Men talked eagerly at street corners, while others were busy reading printed sheets which seemed to be in great demand. Indeed, some went up and down the streets hawking them, and shouting aloud the quality of their wares. "An exposure of the Roman Serpent," they cried. "'Rome for Canterbury, or a true relation of the birth and life of William Laud'; buy and read for yourselves, worthy sirs."

"Nay, buy not his," others would cry, "for I have better. Here you have it: 'Rome's A B C.' Or here is still a better, 'Canterbury's Will'; this will

tell you what the tailor's little son would do for England."

"Ah, but this is the best of all," another would shout; "'A parallel between Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York, and William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury.'"

And this went on all up Whitehall, so much so that one might have fancied that one was in a country fair.

I saw many of the King's soldiers, too, who with drawn swords walked the streets, and as they went they challenged others of soberer apparel to come and fight. Also they shouted with great glee, "Long live King Charles, and down with the Puritans. The Church and the King for ever." Many of these same soldiers, moreover, were ill-behaved, and used the most unseemly language I ever heard. And this I believed was because they were drunk, even although noonday had not yet arrived.

But I had not time to pay heed to all that took place around me, for, as I said, the Archbishop had commanded me to ride straight to Cambridge, and then wait upon a fanatical Puritan on the following morning. Nevertheless I could not help thinking of all I had seen and heard, for being a youth straight from the country, everything was strange. Neither could I help calling to mind the conversation which had taken place between the Archbishop and my new master, and even although I could not understand its meaning it interested me much. I marvelled much, moreover, at the way these two men had spoken to each other, seeing that both their manner and speech seemed lacking in courtesy. I learnt afterwards, however, that the freedom with which

they spoke to each other was because of their close friendship. Indeed, men had it that Laud loved Strafford as though he were his own brother, and that each bore words from the other which, had another man spoken them, would have meant weeks, if not months, in an evil-smelling dungeon.

When once I got into the country, and the noise and the bustle of London town were far behind, all my many thoughts and fears left me as if by magic. And this was no wonder, for the country through which I passed was very fair to the eye, especially as the sky above was clear, so that the sun shone brightly on bursting leaf and opening flower. The birds were singing gaily among the trees, and the lambkins in the meadows sported for very joy in life. Therefore, being of a cheerful temperament and full of hope concerning the future, I shouted aloud as I rode along the quiet roads. Sometimes, indeed, I fell to singing, and my horse, which caught the spirit of the day, also capered and curvetted as if for very joy.

I have been told since that many footpads infested the road from London to Cambridge, but I saw naught of them, and before sundown I was comfortably ensconced in a well-kept inn in Cambridge.

Nothing of import happened at the inn, although I could not help noticing that many talked gloomily concerning the country. Here, too, I heard men speaking evilly both of my master and of Laud, while some went so far as to shrug their shoulders when the King's name was mentioned.

"Something will have to be done," I heard men say again and again. "King Charles will not listen to our complaints. He makes us pay, and pay, and pay,

while we get naught for it. As for Strafford and Laud, they just aid and abet him. They would treat us as though we lived in one of those benighted countries where a man may not call his soul his own. For eleven years they have done what they would with us. Parliament was dissolved eleven years agone, and then when it was called a month ago it was kicked out in three weeks. 'The King must rule, not Parliament,' saith Strafford, and so men like Hampden and Pym be treated as though they were dogs. As for Laud, he is just trying to drag the country back to Mary's time. He saith he is not a Papist, but wherein he differs from the Papists is not easy to see. He is seeking to make every man pray just as he pleases, and if any pray as their conscience tells them, then be they treated as though they be Turks, and not Christian men. 'The Church must govern men's souls,' he saith; ay, but what Church? Is it to be the Protestant Church, or the Papist Church? I believe in these Independents, I do. 'Let a man pray according to his conscience,' say they, and there's reason in it."

Thus tongues wagged in Cambridge town, but I said naught to any who spoke thus, first because Lord Strafford and the Archbishop had commanded me to hear and remember all and answer nothing, and second because I knew so little of what they were talking about that I felt I should only make myself look foolish if I tried to show them that they were wrong. Besides, I did not desire that any man should guess my mission thither, so I sat quietly and listened.

The next morning I set out for Ely, which is but a few miles from Cambridge, and where I was destined

to meet a man, then unknown, but of whom the whole country was talking a little later. I was but little more than an hour on my journey to Ely, where, as it seemed to me, nothing was of importance save the great Church which well-nigh overshadowed everything.

"Can you tell me where one Master Oliver Cromwell lives?" I asked a man who stood gossiping with two others near the church door.

"Ay, young master," he replied, "I can."

"Will you do so then," I made reply, "for I desire to have speech with him?"

The man looked at me steadily, and seemed to be examining my gay attire. After looking at me for well-nigh a minute, he looked at his companions and laughed heartily.

"What can this young bantam-cock have to do with Master Cromwell, neighbours?" he said with a laugh.

"Perchance he desireth to give him lessons concerning the matter of curling his hair and weaving feathers," replied one of the gossips.

Again they looked at me, and then I became much angered, for they whispered together, casting furtive glances at me as they spoke.

"Thou art from Court, I ween?" said one presently.

"That is surely my affair," I replied.

"Speak not rudely," he made answer, "or I may e'en make it my affair."

Again they whispered together, and then one said aloud: "It is not our affair. Master Cromwell will know how to deal with him, even although he comes from the devil himself. So direct him, I say."

"Still," said the first who had spoken, "we want none of Laud's spies here. Who be you, young curly head, and from whence come you?"

"I have come from Cornwall," I said, "and I desire speech with Master Cromwell."

"Know you aught of Laud, the little clothier's son, or of Strafford?" he asked.

"I entered London for the first time the night before last," I made answer, "and I left it early yesterday."

"But——"

"I have naught to do with you," I answered. "If you will tell me where Master Cromwell lives, tell me; if not, I will find out elsewhere."

"Be thou Protestant or Papist?" he asked.

"I am an Englishman," I answered, "that is enough for thee"; whereupon I turned on my heel and walked away, while one of the men shouted after me, "Master Cromwell lives but a stone's-throw away, beneath the shadow of the cathedral," and he pointed to a low but roomy house close by.

I quickly found my way thither, and on demanding to see Master Cromwell was asked by a woman of plain attire and solemn of face what my name was and what my business might be.

"That I will explain to Master Cromwell," I made answer, for I was much angered at the suspicious way in which everyone looked at me.

"Ay, but your name, young master," said the woman; "that I must e'en tell him."

"Master Roderick Falkland, from Cornwall," I replied.

"From Cornwall?" muttered the woman. "Ay, I thought he was from some strange country. Doubt-

less he knows not the ways of English people. Stay here, and I will go and tell Master Cromwell."

"Master Oliver Cromwell will see you," she said; "come this way."

I followed her along the stone-paved hall, thinking how silent and forsaken everything was, and wondering how Lord Strafford should imagine that one who lived in such a simple way could in aught influence the life of the country. Little time was given me to take notice of my surroundings, however, for presently the woman stopped at a door which was partly open.

"Go in there," she said, and left me.

At this I hesitated, for it accorded not with my ideas of what was fitting to enter a room unannounced; so I made a noise in the passage and said: "It is I, Roderick Falkland, who desire speech with Master Cromwell. May I come in?"

"Ay, come in—an you come in God's name."

The voice, as I thought, was harsh and unmusical, but not unkind. I therefore entered the room, and in a moment I was face to face with three men. The first I saw was a youth scarcely as old as myself, and looked of no quality whatsoever. His face was much tanned and weather-beaten, and his clothes were coarse and ill-made. Nevertheless, he had not the appearance of a clown—rather, as I looked at him a second time, I fancied him a man of courage, and possibly of courtesy also. There was a look in his clear grey eye which drew me towards him, and as he rose to his feet I saw that he was, although of no great height, broad of shoulder and strong of limb.

The other was of sad and solemn face. His hair was cut close to his head, as though he were a groom

or an apprentice; nevertheless, he carried himself with dignity.

"Neither of these can be Master Cromwell," I said to myself, and then I looked at the third, and even as I did so my heart gave a great bound, why I knew not. The man before me was about forty years of age, of no great stature, neither was he of comely appearance; rather he appeared somewhat loose of figure, though, as I imagined, of great strength. His clothes, too, were rough, and evidently made by a country tailor, while his linen was crumpled. Evidently he was not a man who paid much attention to those fineries, which I had been always instructed was the duty of every gentleman. But what impressed me was the look on his face. Not that he possessed any beauty of feature which youths such as I delighted in; rather it was plain. His skin was coarse of texture and somewhat red, his features were large, and in no way suggested high breeding, while on his nose was a wart, which went far to disfigure it altogether. Still, I could not help looking at him, for I, who admired strength beyond all things, felt that I was looking into the face of a man of strength. Stern strength perhaps, but still strength. His eyes were large, and bold, and steadfast; his face told me of power to lead, power to command. I knew then that this was Oliver Cromwell, and I did not wonder that Lord Strafford felt that in gaining him he would thereby save his cause.

"Master Roderick Falkland?"

I bowed.

"You would speak with me?"

"I wish to speak with Master Oliver Cromwell."

"Then speak on."

I looked at the other two men, and was silent.

"You would have speech alone with me?"

"Yes," I replied.

He gave me one keen, searching glance, and I felt as though his eyes were piercing me.

"Oliver, my son, will you take Master Drysdale into the dining hall? You will see that he has a drink of ale and food before he goes."

Then turning to me, he said slowly, and keeping his eyes fixed on me, "And now what would you, Master Roderick Falkland?"

CHAPTER VII

HOW MASTER CROMWELL ANSWERED THE GREAT ARCHBISHOP

For the first time I truly felt the delicacy of the mission on which I was come, and of my unfitness for my work. I wondered too, more than ever, why Lord Strafford should have chosen me—an ignorant stripling—to perform such an important duty. Still, I did my best to banish my fears, and determined to speak boldly, and with such wisdom as I could command. Moreover, I soon grew to feel more at ease in his presence, for after he had examined me, he seemed to regard me with favour, and to look upon me with kindly eyes.

"I am but lately from my father's home, Master Cromwell," I said, "and hence if I speak not my thoughts plainly, I trust I may be excused. I have had little or no experience with matters of importance, and am, I am afraid, but ill-informed concerning the affairs of our time."

"Ay," he said. "Thou art but a boy. Of what age, may I ask?"

"I was twenty-one the day before I left Cornwall, about a week ago," I made reply.

"Smooth of face, and of a ruddy countenance, even as was David," he said, like one speaking to himself. "And thy name is Roderick Falkland?"

"Son of Sir John Falkland," I said, somewhat proudly.

"Any kin to Lord Falkland?"

"Own cousin," I answered.

At that he looked at me again with keen, searching eyes, and then went on: "But thou didst not come here for naught. Did Lord Falkland send thee?"

"No, Master Cromwell."

"Who then?"

"I entered the service of Lord Strafford only the day before yesterday."

"You entered the service of Thomas Wentworth," he cried, and I thought his voice became harsh, while astonishment came into his eyes, "and did you come from him to me?"

"Ay, sir, from him, and another."

"And another? His name?"

"From one whom you have as yet failed to understand," I said, bearing in mind my instructions; "from one who wishes his country well, but who has been much maligned. One, too, who has great kindness in his heart for you, Master Cromwell, and who told me that he desired to do well for you."

"His name, lad? his name?" he demanded roughly.

"The great Archbishop Laud," I said.

He started as though an adder had bitten him, and then he gazed at me again.

"Surely," he murmured, "this boy cannot yet be corrupted by lies. He cannot carry a Judas's heart and such a face at the same time."

"I have come with letters," I said; "also I came to answer such questions as you may feel disposed to ask."

At this he laughed almost bitterly.

"Letters," he said, "and doth he believe that I will read his letters? Hath he not for years persecuted the children of God? Hath he not, like Pharaoh of old time, afflicted them grievously? Hath he not driven them from home, and kin and friends, and are there not all over the country those who have served the Lord faithfully, but who now are, like the children of Israel, in a strange land because of this Antichrist? And doth he believe that I will in aught hold communication with him, when I know that his every word is poison, and his every act a pitfall to catch the unwary? What sayest thou, young man?" And still he gazed at me like one in wonder.

"I say," I replied, "that, in the words of the Apostle, we should think no evil, even of those we believe to be our enemies."

"Ah!" he cried, "hast thou read the word of God?"

"I have read but little else," I replied, "save those books which Master Piper said were necessary to the full instruction of the son of a gentleman. It is because I have read that Book, that I believe men of honour should ever be courteous to each other, neither should they discard any message which is courteously given."

"Whatever I think of the man who sent thee to me, I believe thou art an honest lad," said Oliver Cromwell. "But I am turned forty, and thus have lived twice thy age. Because of this I play not with scorpions, nor with dogs which have poisonous teeth. Nevertheless, it may be that thou speakest truly, and surely no man could use such as thee to bear lying messages. So believe this, young Master Roderick Falkland: had thy master sent instead of thee one of the blaspheming, wine-bibbing sots of Charles's

Court, I would e'en have sent him back with his letters unopened. But Falkland is a good name, and thy face is truthful, so I will e'en take the messages for the messenger's sake. Where be these letters?"

Upon that I handed him the letters which the great Archbishop had given me, and waited while he read them.

I must confess that I would have given much, even at that time, to have seen the terms in which the Archbishop addressed this rough Puritan; while knowing what I know now, the desire has become stronger. Nevertheless, I know nothing of the words written save what revealed itself in our conversation, and by what was suggested in the conversation between the two ministers of King Charles.

I noticed that he paid great heed to every word that was written, and that he was not content with one perusal, but read each missive a second time, as though he were deeply weighing the purport of each word. When he had finished he sat for a long time as if in deep thought. For a time I think he had forgotten my presence, and I wondered much what thoughts were passing behind that great rugged brow, and what were the feelings that filled his heart. I realised then, moreover, even more than I had realised at first, the sturdy strength of this plain Puritan, for although he spoke no word, his very presence suggested foresight, and resolution, and courage. His eyes attracted me most. Frank they were, yet questioning; not cruel, but bold and unwavering.

"The devil hath often quoted Scripture," I heard him say at length. "Ay, and Antichrist doth continually speak of sacred things as though he believed in them."

He turned upon me suddenly, and his questions were sharp, and terse, and eager.

"Know you aught of Laud?"

"I have seen him twice only."

"When?"

I told him.

"Where and how?"

At first I resented his manner of speech, but I deemed it best to answer frankly, so I told him.

"And that is all?"

"That is all."

"And Thomas Wentworth, tell me what you know of him."

"I know naught of him, save that I am in his service and ready to do his bidding."

"But why did he choose such as thee to perform such a mission?"

I was silent for a minute, remembering what I had heard Lord Strafford say.

"Because he thought I would serve him honestly," I said presently.

"Dost thou know aught of what these letters contain?"

"I have not seen them. Yet do I believe that I know."

"What, think you, are their contents?"

"Both Lord Strafford and the Archbishop believe that the Presbyterians of Scotland and the Presbyterians of England are banded together to destroy the Church of God," I replied. "If they succeed, they will impose Presbyterianism in England, which will be worse for the Independents than is the rule of the Church and the King. They desire to bend all to their will, and would bind the nation to

their stern, hard creeds. Therefore will the King treat Independents kindly if they help the King in his holy war against their rebellion."

"Dost thou believe this?" The question was asked so angrily that I judged him to be in a passion.

"Believe what?" I asked.

"That Laud would treat Independents kindly. Dost thou believe that he would have them pray and worship as they are led by the Lord? Thou hast met with this Laud, spoken with him, and—and, young as thou art, thou hast eyes to see and a mind to think. In this letter he promises in a vague way to treat those who would pray according to Scripture with much kindness and consideration, if they will but help the King to resist the encroachments of the Presbyterians, and such as seek to undermine the King's authority. Dost thou believe he would do this?"

I was silent, for at that moment there came back to me the remembrance of the words Laud and Strafford had spoken to each other. At that time I did not realise what they meant, but now I thought I understood. Nevertheless I was not sure, and because I was Laud's messenger I spoke warily.

"I am here only to bring the Archbishop's message, Master Cromwell," I said, "and I cannot say what is in his mind. Nevertheless, as he is a man of honour and a man of God, it is surely right to accept what he hath written in good faith."

"Man of honour! Man of God!" he cried, as though in great anger, and then he checked himself. Again he gave me a keen, searching glance, then starting from his chair, he began to walk up and down the room.

I now saw more clearly than before what a sturdy, stalwart figure he had; I saw, too, how resolute and decided were his movements, and I began to think I had misjudged these Independents, of whom so many evil things had been spoken. For, as all the world knows, Puritanism was one thing and Independency was another. A great part of the Established Church of England called itself Puritan, and many of its ministers had protested much against the practices which Laud desired them to favour, but they were still members of the State Church, and as such were respected. But Independency was a different matter. These men had broken away from the Church; they followed the teaching of a fellow named Brown, whom I had been taught to despise. They obeyed not the laws of the land, and demanded the right to hold their meetings how and when they would, and to pray according to their own fancy. I had been taught to think of them as a hypocritical, psalm-singing set of clowns, who practised a false piety in order to cover up their evil deeds, and who as a consequence deserved all the punishment which had been meted out to them. Now I began to see that I might have been mistaken, for I could not help feeling that this Oliver Cromwell, an Independent, was an honest, sincere man. Mistaken he might be, but still a man of courage and honour.

I watched him as he strode up and down the room, and noticed that his gait was somewhat awkward. Evidently he knew nothing of those arts of movement, supposed to be essential to the carriage of a man of high birth. And yet I seemed little and weak beside him. His rugged strength overpowered me. The flash of his large eyes also told me that he

was thinking deeply, and that he was weighing the words the Archbishop had written.

Presently he broke into the habit so common to men who live much in the country, and who as a consequence speak aloud when communing with their own souls.

"There is something in it," I heard him say. "There is but little more freedom in the will of the Presbytery than in the will of a Bishop. Both would hinder the word of the Lord, both would have us pray according to their will. The Bishops would enforce one thing, the Presbyteries would enforce another. 'We will have Episcopacy and the King,' saith Laud; 'We will have Presbyterianism,' saith the other. Whereas where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But can a man trust this wily bishop, this tyrannous Wentworth, this shifty King? Will the children of God be able to pray according to their conscience and to spread the word of God?"

Again he took the letters I had brought and read them, and then I saw the light of resolution come into his eyes.

"After all Laud is but a tool of the Pope," he said. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? No, great God, no! This wily priest stands for cruelty, for craftiness, and for the return of Antichrist. Was he not offered a Cardinal's hat when he was appointed Archbishop, and hath he not been Romanising the Church every day? As for the Presbyterians, they do stand for Protestantism and the word of God. Did not Jeannie Geddes throw the stool at the priest's head? Have they not fought for liberty and the Bible? No, no; he that is not

against us is for us, and men who have fought for the word of God cannot be our enemies."

He continued to walk around the room, still muttering to himself, as though he could not think continuously, unless he translated his thought into speech.

"William Laud expecteth an answer from me?" he said at length, turning suddenly upon me.

"Yes, Master Cromwell," I replied.

"Then shall he have it! In the name of the Lord he shall have it!" he cried. "And it is this, young Roderick Falkland. The people have long cried unto the Lord to stay Laud's cruel hand. For years we have suffered while he hath aided and abetted the King in injustice, in cruelty and lies. For years his name hath been a byword for persecution and slavery, and now the People of England will be content with nothing but justice. Ay, ay, he feareth, and Thomas Wentworth feareth, and Charles Stuart feareth. For years this trinity have lived for oppression and wrong, and now the Lord will lay bare His arm. I tell you the cup of their iniquity runneth over. Again and again have they been warned, and still have they defied the statutes of the Most High. Like Pharaoh of old, these men have again and again hardened their hearts against the suffering of God's people. But a Moses will be raised up, and the people shall be judged with equity. Tell William Laud this. Tell him that I, Oliver Cromwell, will live and work and fight for justice, not for injustice; for truth, and not for lies; for liberty, and not for slavery; for the word of God, and not for Antichrist. Ay, and tell him to tremble, and to repent, if he will not be cut off from the land of his fathers."

The man's vehemence carried me away, for up to this moment I had not realised the feelings of those who demanded justice at the King's hands.

"Why, what evil hath he done?" I cried, bewildered at his speech.

"Evil!" he cried, and then he poured into my ears such a story as I had never dreamed of. Of the iniquities of the Star Chamber, of iniquitous taxes, of a violation of the constitution, and of religious oppression.

"Oh, not for naught is the nation aroused," he cried; "not for naught are we banding ourselves together. Oh, I see the working of the minds of these men. They heard that one Oliver Cromwell, a poor, benighted Independent, had some influence. They heard that he could influence men's minds, and gather an army together. Then they said, 'We will catch him with guile. We will offer him bribes, we will make fair promises which will mean nothing. We will use him to fasten the King's crown more firmly on his head, and thus enable us to strengthen the fetters on the people's wrists. Then when we have done this, and when the people are subdued, we will bend the necks of these same Independents. But whom shall we send for our messenger?' they said. 'This Oliver Cromwell is a man of plain speech, and one who loveth simplicity. If we send one of the spendthrifts from Charles's Court, if we send a smooth-spoken Churchman, he will not listen. But here is a beardless boy, one who is from the country. He shall take our messages, and he in his innocence shall do more than those who be wise and subtle.'"

"I will tell him what you have said," I made answer.

"Ay, tell him," he cried; "and tell him that the time of his downfall draweth nigh."

I rose to my feet and prepared to leave.

"Thou wilt take something to eat and drink before thy journey," he said.

"No," I replied; "I will not eat the food of the King's enemies; I will not stay longer beneath the roof of one who outrages the Church."

"Thou art an honest lad, Roderick Falkland," he said kindly; "ay, and something tells me that thy heart shall be touched, and thine eyes be opened. For the truth which is hidden from the wise and the prudent is oft revealed unto babes."

I thought his eyes became humid as he looked at me, and certainly the harshness left his voice.

"I am loyal to the King," I made answer, "and I will not oppose the Lord's anointed!"

"The Lord's anointed!" he cried. "Was Queen Mary the Lord's anointed? Was Philip of Spain, who sent ships to England to drag us back to Popery, the Lord's anointed? But stay, dost thou believe in God, young man?"

"Ay, and in the King, and in the King's cause," I answered.

"Thou believest in God. Then wilt thou follow God?"

"Ay," I replied.

"Thou goest back to London town," he replied. "Thou wilt have little to do, unless William Laud sends thee on more errands, for Thomas Wentworth is gone to Ireland."

"To Ireland!" I cried in astonishment.

"Ay, to Ireland. Oh, believe me, we in the country know what happeneth at Whitehall. Well, thou wilt

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have both time and opportunity to think of those things which distract the people. Pay good heed to what thou seest and hearest, and then, even as thou hast said, follow the leadings of God."

"And how may a man know when he is following the leadings of God?" I asked.

"By the teaching of His word, and by the light of his conscience," he replied. "If thou wilt do that, perchance we may meet again, Master Roderick Falkland."

It seemed to me then, as it seemeth to me now, that he was echoing my mother's words; and when, as I left the house, he lifted his hands and said solemnly, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord cause His face to shine upon thee and grant thee His peace," a strange feeling crept into my heart, the which I could not explain.

No sooner did I leave this man's house than I made straight for London. It seemed to me that I had need to make known his words to the great Archbishop right quickly, for if, as Oliver Cromwell had said, Lord Strafford had gone to Ireland, then should not only the King's trusted servant, but the King himself, have the truth made known to him.

I was very angry at this plain-spoken Independent —all the more because it was not in my power to answer him, and I remember determining that on my return to London I would acquaint myself with the meaning of all the things of which I had heard, so that I might be able to give good account of myself even in a battle of words.

By mid-day I was miles on my journey back to London, and then, feeling hungry, I began wondering where I might get food both for myself and the horse

which I rode. So presently seeing a peasant woman by the roadside, I accosted her, and asked her to tell me the way to the nearest town which lay in the direction of London, and where I could find a good inn.

"Ay," replied the dame; "and goest thou to London, young sir?"

"With all speed," I replied.

She looked at me steadily.

"Ay, poor lad! poor lad!" she said.

"And why 'poor lad,' my good dame?" I asked.

"I saw thee in a dream but yesternight," she said.

"A dream, mother?"

"Ay, a dream. I saw thee plainly. Dost thou love a maid with black eyes?" she asked.

"What is that to you, dame?"

"Oh, naught, naught. But thou art like my boy who is dead, and my heart goes out to thee. Shall I tell thee something?"

"Art thou a witch, mother?"

"Say not the word. But when thou returnest to London town, tell not thy thoughts to one who would appear to be thy friend."

"And why?" I asked with a laugh.

"Because he loves the maid with black eyes, and he will seek to win her from thee—and—but why should I seek to warn him?" she mumbled, changing her tone of voice. "What is written will be. I cannot alter what lies before him. Ay, and it is black—black! War, and rumours of war. Homeless and friendless—ah! The nearest town where thou wilt find an inn is Buntingford. Go in God's name, and may He have pity on thee!"

With that she turned away from me, neither would she speak another word in spite of my many questions.

After I had eaten and drunk at Buntingford, I rode to London with all speed. Here I found that Oliver Cromwell had told me truly. Lord Strafford was gone to Ireland, and I was commanded to present myself to the Archbishop without delay. When I reached Lambeth Palace, however, I was told that the crowds had attacked the Archbishop's house with such force that his Grace had deemed it wise to leave London for a time, and he had given orders concerning me that I must ride to Addington, near the town of Croydon, as fast as my horse could carry me.

Late as it was, therefore, and weary as I was, I set out for Croydon, wondering what Archbishop Laud would say when I told him what Oliver Cromwell had bidden me tell him.

CHAPTER VIII

TELLS OF MY ACQUAINTANCE WITH MASTER RALPH GREENVIL

It was late at night when I arrived at Addington, a large house a little more than a mile from the town of Croydon. It was with a heavy heart that I went thither, for I felt that I had failed in the very first mission upon which I had been sent. I reflected, moreover, that both Strafford and Laud were impatient at all failure, and had but little patience with those who did not succeed in carrying out their plans. If, therefore, Laud should be angry with me, as I felt sure he would be, and perhaps persuade Lord Strafford to believe I was but a numskull, all my hopes for the future might be destroyed in a moment. For, as I regarded it, all my future depended on the grace of these men. Proud as I was, I felt I could not go back to Rosiland unless I fulfilled the hopes she had concerning me, and Rosiland was more to me even than the King's favour. Still, I had done my best, and I did not believe that any other man would have succeeded where I had failed.

I sought admission at Addington House, therefore, with a brave heart, if a sad one, and having told my name, was, without much ado, admitted into the

Archbishop's presence. He had evidently but just come from some religious ceremony, for he wore his bishop's robes, and, as a consequence, appeared of greater importance than when at Lambeth Palace. Still, he impressed me less, even then, than had the Independent farmer whom I had left that morning. After all, and in spite of his lawn sleeves and ruffled neckgear, he seemed but a little dapper man of no great consequence. His white moustache and short pointed beard accorded not with his flowing robes, while his fat hands and somewhat chubby face looked almost childish. Moreover, his flat black velvet cap seemed less becoming than the red headgear he had worn at our first meeting.

And yet he made my heart beat fast. Something in his large, full, dark eyes mastered me in spite of myself. I did not understand that something which was behind his look of placidity and gentleness, and presently, when he had bidden his companions leave him, and I stood alone in his presence, my pulses fluttered like an unfledged robin which one might hold in the palms of one's hands.

"You have heard why I left Lambeth?"

He said this almost apologetically, I thought. Why this should be I knew not, for who was I that he should seek to explain his course of action?

"Yes, your Grace."

"The enemies of Christ's Church have gained a seeming victory," he said. "They encompassed me about; ay, they encompassed me about with many threats and false accusations. I said in my heart, like David of olden time, 'Oh that I had the wings of a dove, and then would I fly away, and be at rest.' But there is no rest for me until God's work be done,

therefore have I come here until the Lord shall see fit to cause these yelping dogs to cease barking. And now, Roderick Falkland, tell me how thou hast fared?"

Whereupon I told him truly all that had taken place, while he sat before me, silent and motionless.

"It is well," he said when I had finished my story. "I had trusted in the Lord's enemies to help His Church. What wonder, then, that my hopes should come to naught? Had thou brought back a different story I had perhaps repented afterwards. Would not these Independents have been Achans in our camp? I must e'en do that which I had in my heart before Thomas Wentworth came to me with his mad schemes. Ay, it is ever so. I must go my own way, and fight my battles with those weapons which it shall please the Lord to give to me. And now go, Roderick Falkland. May God guide thee."

He turned from me as he spoke, and I saw I was no more to him than the servant who might throw sticks on his fire. While I might serve him I was of interest, but now I had become as nothing. Thus I presently found myself out in the night without a word of thanks for my diligence. Not a stoup of wine nor a piece of bread had he offered me. I had failed, and he had not upbraided me—and that was all.

My horse was dead tired, for he had carried me many miles that day, while I, weary and disappointed, felt but little fit to ride back to London that night. I therefore walked by his head to Croydon, where I presently found a good tavern called "The Greyhound," and here I decided to obtain supper and bed.

"I am afraid I am very late, but I desire only a simple meal," I said to the innkeeper; "a jug of ale and some bread and beef will satisfy me."

"As chance would have it, young master," replied the man, "I can give you a supper, and that of the best. As for ale, I would scorn to give it you. When a man has some of the best Canary wine, it is a shame for such as you to drink plain home-brewed beer. You see," he went on, "it is but an hour since that a young spark came here, having ridden, as he said, from an outlandish part called Cornwall, and he hath ordered enough supper for five, and it is even now just ready."

"From Cornwall?" I made answer; "told he you his name?"

"Ay, Greenvil, or Grenville, if I make no mistake. A man of quality, too, and one who spends his money freely. I will e'en now go and ask him if he is willing for you to join him."

My heart warmed at once, for although I had left my home but a few days, years had seemed to elapse, and I longed to meet with some one who could talk of home.

"Ay, that is well," I cried; "tell him that Master Roderick Falkland, youngest son of Sir John Falkland, of Trecarrel, would fain meet him at supper."

A minute later he returned, while close at his heels was a gay cavalier of apparently thirty years of age.

"Master Falkland!" cried the latter; "now may the saints be praised! Often have I heard of your father—ay, and of you too. Nay, more, my father and yours be great friends. You know of him, Sir Bevil Greenvil?"

"Who doth not know of him?" I cried. "Often have I heard my father speak of him as the bravest and most loyal gentleman in our county."

"Oh yes, he is all that. It is true I know but little of affairs in England. I have but just returned from the New World, having left lands and honour to my brother. He is the Jacob and I the Esau of our family. My brother Bevil was always a stay-at-home, and I, Ralph, always the rover. At home they call me Ralph the Rover. I have been in England but a month, and I am already on the move again. But this time I go not far. I am come to seek promotion at the King's Court."

"You have come upon troublous times," I said.

"Ay, and what then? All the more need for brave men."

"And you espouse the King's cause?"

"What would you? Think you I would side with these Parliamentarians? Not that I am over-particular as a rule. A man who has mingled much with the Spaniards, as I have, is not over-particular. Nevertheless, I always fight on the side which, if it wins, means a gay life. So down with the Puritans, I say. Let us laugh and drink and love. Have you seen the dark-eyed beauties of Spain, Master Falkland? No? Ah then, life is before you. But let us to our supper, man."

His buoyant, high spirits made me forget my failures and my weariness, and being hungry, I fell to eating my supper with great heartiness. I did not drink much wine, but enough to warm my heart and loosen my tongue, and before our meal was over I found that I had told my companion everything about myself save the mission which I have been

describing. Even then I was not sure I was wise in giving my confidences so freely, but Ralph Greenvil was so gay and so overflowing with good spirits that he drew my words from me in spite of myself. Nevertheless, as I have said, I told him naught concerning my mission to Oliver Cromwell. It is true that more than once I had it on my lips to give him hints concerning this, but before I could open my mouth I remembered the strong, stern face of Strafford and those strange, searching eyes of the great Archbishop, and I was silent. Concerning other matters, however, I spoke freely. I even told him that I regarded myself as betrothed to Rosiland Verona, which interested him mightily.

"I have seen her," he said.

"Seen her! when?" I asked. "Since she came to England she hath never left my father's home, save when she hath visited a neighbour or gone to Launceston Church."

"It must have been at Launceston Church," he said quietly.

"She was there but three weeks ago," I said.

"It must have been then."

"Were you in Launceston three weeks ago?"

At this he spoke in an uncertain way, and fell to asking me questions about my brothers, which I answered freely.

"And so you love this little maid, Master Roderick; but you will soon forget her."

"Never," I replied.

"Ay, but you will. You have not yet seen the beauties of London town, neither have you entered into its gaieties. When I first left England I loved a maid with the same calf's love which you have for

the fair Signorina Verona, but a month among new scenes made me forget her."

"But I am not of that sort, Master Greenvil."

"No? Well, thou art a simple youth. But if thou dost not forget her, she will forget thee."

"Nay, she will not," I cried.

"But she will, and in the days to come, when she is wedded to another man, and thou art wedded to another woman, you will both laugh at your boy-and-girl billing and cooing."

At this I protested eagerly, while he laughed at me, and told me that many before had talked as I did, only to have his opinions afterwards.

"But we are different," I cried presently; "we be not betrothed after the ordinary fashion, nevertheless she gave me something on the day I left home which would keep me from ever thinking of another."

"Ah, maidens be profuse of love tokens," he laughed. "I have a dozen of them even now, and every one of the lasses who told me they loved me have since loved others."

"I shall never receive another," I cried. "I wear what she gave me over my heart, and shall always wear it until we next meet."

At this he laughed gaily, nevertheless I saw that he was much interested, and sought to gain much information concerning Rosiland.

"Men say she is rich?" he said, eyeing me keenly.

"Ay, I believe so," I replied, "but I reck naught of that. I will win a fortune for her, and when I go to Cornwall three years of hence she will be twenty-one. Then shall I show her what she gave me, and tell her that I am come to claim her."

We talked far into the night, and when we parted

it was only to arrange that we should ride together to London the next day—I to report myself at the house of my Lord Strafford, he to carry out his plans, concerning which, however, he told me nothing.

The next day we went to London, where I found the town much disturbed. I heard grave rumours of trouble in Ireland, whither my master had gone, while gossips had it that unless King Charles altered his mode of conduct in England we should have grave doings at home. But these things troubled me not, for almost unconsciously I drifted into the gay doings of the town. I found that my master had left no commands concerning me, and thus while I was regarded as one of his retainers, I was left to pass my time according to my own desires. Moreover, young Master Greenvil, whose affairs were a constant mystery to me, made much of me, and I, vain of having as my friend one so much older than I, and one also who had seen so much of the world, followed his leading without much hesitation. In truth, for months, neither my master nor the Archbishop having sought my services in any fashion, I became a loafer in taverns, and in the streets, just as many another of like position to myself became.

I mention this with sorrow and with shame, for while no man could say that I did aught to disgrace my father's name, I did nevertheless forget my mother's words, and became the companion of a set of gay young swashbucklers, of which the London streets were full. I tried to ease my conscience by taking lessons in swordsmanship and shooting at a target, but beyond this my life was made up of nothing of which my father would approve.

And yet, perhaps my course of life was natural.

I was of necessity cast into the company of those who thronged Whitehall, all of whom professed loyalty to the King, and many of whom longed for war in order to give them excitement. And this seemed not impossible. Rumour had it that the Scots were preparing to march on England, even while my master was in Ireland endeavouring to raise an army. Meanwhile, however, we spent our days and many of our nights in loafing around taverns, picking quarrels with believers in the Parliament—with whom we had many a fray—and gossiping about the wars which everybody believed to be impending. I did not trouble much about the right or wrong of the quarrel between the King and his Parliament. I sided with the King without question. I was thrown in with those who espoused his quarrel, and looked upon his adversaries as low-bred, sour-faced Puritans, who were of no account whatever, and who would presently be routed and confounded. Had I given thought to the rights and wrongs of the matter, I might have thought differently, for those who sided with the King were, while men of good family, far from what I expected. Those I met cared little for religion or righteousness, and talked only of giving the "sour-faced Jeremiahs a lesson." Still I trusted in them entirely, for not only were my companions, in spite of their dissolute ways, men of good family, but always repeated the cry which my father had taught me: "For the King. Right or wrong, always for the King!"

And now I have to record an event which not only caused me much confusion and sorrow, but brought me into contact with people of whom I had hitherto been nearly in ignorance.

We were, I remember, some eight or ten of us, drinking and playing at dice and cards in the Golden Cross Inn. Master Ralph Greenvil was with us, and, as usual, was the most boisterous of our party. For some time past he had been somewhat of a mystery to me. At times, especially when he had been drinking much wine, he had spoken of Rosiland Verona in a way I could not understand. He had even hinted that he had asked her hand in marriage, and when I had questioned him concerning this he had either laughed loudly or had answered in an unsatisfactory way. More than once, moreover, he had questioned me concerning the love-token she had given me, and had also expressed a desire to see it. Many times he had urged me to drink more than was good for me, and had invited me to accompany him to places which I shuddered at the thought of entering. For, foolish as I was at this time, I could not forget the influence of my mother, while the lock of hair Rosiland had given me, and the words she had written, acted upon me like a fabled talisman, and kept me from participating in the base pleasures which were so common among my companions. Remembering what took place afterwards, ay, remembering the way Rosiland treated me in those terrible days which were even now foreshadowed, I thank God for her influence over my life. Of this I am sure, there is no power under the great heavens so potent in keeping a youth strong amidst temptations as love for a maid whom he looks upon as pure and true.

On this night of which I speak, however, I well-nigh forgot myself. My luck at cards was very great, and, excited by my good fortune, I drank

more than was good for me, while all the time Ralph Greenvil was at my elbow, urging the bottle on me. While my excitement was at its highest my luck changed, and I began to lose what I had won.

Acting upon a kind of half-drunken instinct, I declared that as the hour was late I would play no more, whereupon my opponent, who boasted of being the best swordsman in London, having taken lessons from the best fencing-masters in France and Spain and Italy, declared that if I gave up at such a time I should not be acting worthy of a man of good blood. Up to now, although I had often been laughed at for what was called my Puritan ways, I had been a general favourite among my companions, and that in spite of the fact that, as I thought, Ralph Greenvil had often sought to set me a-quarrelling.

"Ah!" I cried excitedly, for I had this night drunk more wine than was good for me, "no man shall say I act in a way unworthy my father's name, so I will e'en play while I have a pound left, or there is a candle in the house."

"No," cried Greenvil, "I stand by my brother Cornishman; if he cares not to play more he hath a right to refuse. And what is more, if Nicholas Burleigh saith that Roderick Falkland acts not as a man of honour, I will stand by him while he chastises him for his insolence"

At this there was a general uproar. Words were bandied freely, until I, my brain almost turned with wine and the money I had put in my pocket, scarce knew what I was saying.

I remember that while the noise was at the loudest my kinsman, Essex Falkland, tried to pull me

away. "Greenvil is thy enemy, Roderick," I heard him say; "let us get away, or harm will be done to thee!"

But I was in no humour to listen to reason. I believed myself to be insulted by Nicholas Burleigh, so, throwing him off, I declared that I would fight any man who dared to question my honour.

Whereupon Burleigh, whom I had often seen with Greenvil, declared that I was no better than a hypocritical, psalm-singing Puritan, and that I had acted in a way unworthy a follower of King Charles.

At this, in spite of my kinsman, I struck him in the face, and in a twinkling of an eye swords were drawn, while space was cleared in the room for us to fight.

At this the landlord came in in great frenzy. "Good heavens, worshipful sirs," he cried, "fight not here. You know the Archbishop makes it terribly hard for poor innkeepers, and if the constables do come here and find you fighting, he will side with the Puritans, and make it hard not only for you but for me."

"To the fiends with both the Archbishop and the Puritans," cried Greenvil. "If Roderick Falkland can brook Burleigh's insults, then is he but an arrant coward, and he will be ashamed to meet his father in the flesh."

"If you must fight, worshipful sirs," cried the innkeeper, "there is a mews close by here, which is well hedged in. The moon is full, and so the light will be good."

Even then I felt that I was being dragged into a quarrel, and, a ray of good sense coming to me,

I declared that I desired not to fight, but would play with Burleigh instead.

At this there was a general cry of "Cock-sparrow," "White-liver," "Cowardly Puritan," and the like, until, swept off my feet by my passion, I again struck Nicholas Burleigh in the face.

After this I remember but little, until I found myself in a yard that smelt of stable manure, with my sword drawn, and Master Nicholas Burleigh before me.

I was still sober enough to have some of my wits about me, and I remember thinking that in spite of Burleigh's boast of being the best swordsman in England, I fared not badly. As the innkeeper had said, the light was good, and we fought with equal fortune for some time. In truth, I thought I was getting the best of the battle, for, as it seemed to me, I had him at advantage, when there was a sound of many footsteps, followed by cries of confusion among my companions.

"Sheathe your swords, and run," some one said; but I was so anxious to run my opponent through the body that I heeded not the voice, even though the yard had become empty as if by magic. Then I felt a blow behind my ear, which made me see a thousand stars, and hear a noise like many thunders. After that all became black.

When my senses came back to me again I was lying in an evil-smelling street, most of my clothes torn from my back, and my head aching fit to split.

Instinctively I put my hand over my heart to find the sachet Rosiland had given me, and which I had never ceased to wear since the day I left home, and then I cried aloud with a bitter cry.

"The sachet is stolen!" I shouted aloud, scarce knowing what I was saying. "Stop, thief! Stop, you villains!"

Then my head became dizzy, while I felt my senses leaving me again. I struggled to cry, but it seemed as though my voice had left me; but as I felt myself falling I heard the sound of voices and of footsteps.

CHAPTER IX

HOW I FOUND MY WAY INTO THE HOUSE OF MASTER ANDREW MARLOW, A SEPARATIST PREACHER

"THE poor youth is dead!"

"Nay, his pulse is beating."

"He hath been wounded on the head."

"Ay, and he hath lost blood. There is a sword's thrust in his side."

"Perchance he is one of these drunken braggarts who be always fighting. We had better let him lie."

"No, he hath a good face; besides, he is almost naked. It were a sin to leave him so."

"Ay, but what clothes he hath is the gay frippery of the King's men. He hath long curls too! There, he is moving."

All this I heard as if in a dream. The voices seemed far away at first, but little by little they came nearer, and presently, when my senses came back fully to me, I looked and saw two men by my side.

"Give me my sachet," I cried.

"Your sachet? What sachet? We have no sachet."

"Rosiland's sachet. Give it back to me, you thieves."

"Nay, we be no thieves. We were but passing by,

and heard a cry. We came here, and found you lying like one dead."

"But I must have my sachet," I cried, as yet scarcely realising what had taken place. "I tell you Rosiland gave it to me, and I would not lose it for worlds."

"Perhaps you have lost it in the road here. We will look for it."

Then, like a flash of light, all that had taken place came back to me, and I fell to sobbing like a boy of seven. I recked nothing of my poor aching head, my wounded body or my lost clothes, but the love-token which my dear maid had given to me was dearer than aught else, and I felt that nothing could console me.

"Let me go to my lodging-place," I said in despair, and thinking nothing of the plight I was in.

Whereupon I got on to my feet, and tried to think where I was. But the place was utterly strange; besides, my head was swimming so that, had not my companions upheld me, I should have fallen again.

"Where do you lodge?" said one of them. "Tell us, and we will take you thither."

But although I tried hard to recollect, I could not tell them where.

"I have lost my sachet," I said, "and—and——" Then I could speak no more.

I have little remembrance of what happened after that. I call to mind some vague memories of being led through unknown places, and of being spoken to kindly, but nothing distinct remains with me, save that some one hurt my head sorely, while my side burned as though some one kept a red-hot piece of iron on it. After a time a kind of torpor fell upon

me, which grew deeper and deeper, until I became unconscious of everything.

When next I opened my eyes to reason I found myself in a small room. I was entirely alone, and I judged that the day was dying, for the light reminded me of eventide. I was lying on a comfortable bed, while a feeling of delicious languor possessed me. Presently, when I looked around I saw that the place was lit by one small window, and I remember trying to count the number of pieces of glass in it by the huge lumps in each pane. There was nothing on the floor, but I saw that the wood was scrubbed perfectly clean. The bedclothes, too, were spotlessly white. There were no ornaments or bits of finery of any sort in the chamber. By my side was a table, on which was placed a Bible, but nothing else.

"Where am I?" I asked myself; but not a notion had I as to how my question could be answered. Still, I did not trouble myself. A great peace pervaded the place, and before long I felt myself falling asleep. I had a dream, too. I thought that a young maid stood beside me, watching me. It was not Rosiland; that I knew full well, although even in my dream I thought of her, while looking at the young maid's face. Not that I could clearly distinguish her features—the light was too dim. But I saw that she had large grey eyes, like those of the wood-doves that cooed among the trees near my old home. Her hair was soft and brown; not curling and gleaming like Rosiland's, but straight, and arranged in a prim fashion around her head. I thought in my dream I tried to speak to her, but she placed her hand on my mouth. Nevertheless, her eyes beamed kindly. I tried to move her hand from

my mouth, but, in doing so, she seemed to vanish from my sight.

At this I awoke, to find myself still alone. Nevertheless, some one had been in the room while I had slept, for I saw a candle near by, while in a cup beside the Bible I saw a bunch of white flowers. Immediately I was reminded of the flowers that grew in our garden at home; and then the memory of the fact that I had lost the sachet which Rosiland had given me came back. Who had taken it? I wondered; for what was the dearest thing in the world to me could not be of value to others. Then I fell to thinking of what had taken place in the inn. I remembered that I had taken overmuch wine, and that I had been led into a drunken brawl.

"I pray God that neither Rosiland nor mother nor father may hear of it," I said to myself; and again I wondered what interest any one could have in stealing my sachet.

While I thought of these things the door of my bedchamber opened, and a young girl came in. She was not unlike the vision I had seen in my dream, for her eyes were soft and dove-like, her hair was brown and abundant, and she was dressed in a quaint, prim attire. She was very fair to look upon, moreover, and I felt glad of her presence, for I hoped that she would tell me where I was, and to whom I owed the kindness I had received.

When she saw that I was awake she turned to go away, and then, as if taking second thought, she said, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes," I replied; "you can help me to find my sachet."

"Sachet! What sachet?"

"That which hath been stolen from me," I replied.

"I know nothing of it," she made answer. "You were brought here late last night, wounded and sick. Through the day you have been like one in a swoon. I came to see whether you lacked aught."

"Where am I?"

"You are in a house close by the river, and near St. Paul's Church."

"But whose house is this? Who brought me here?"

"This house belongs to my father, and it was he who brought you here."

"But your father's name?" I asked.

"My father is Master Andrew Marlow. He was coming hither last night with my cousin, when he saw you lying in the street. And, like the man of whom we read in the Scriptures, you were bruised and wounded and left half-dead; so my father brought you here."

"Your father was truly kind, young mistress," I replied. "Is your father a physician?"

"No; my father is a preacher of the Word of God; but no sooner did he bring you here, than a physician's aid was sought. I will even now go and fetch him. He will be glad to speak to you now that you are clothed and in your right mind."

"No, do not go yet," I said; for the maid's presence was very pleasant to me, and I liked not the thought of talking with a man who I supposed to be some hot gospeller. In truth, I felt annoyed that I should be at all beholden to such an one, for I had been told that it was they who had stirred the people to riot, and had caused the multitude to hate not only Lord Strafford, but the great Archbishop.

"Know you if your father hath discovered how I came in the street where he found me, or who robbed me of my clothes and my sachet?" I asked.

"In truth he has not," she replied, "and I know that he wishes much to speak with you, that you may tell him what led to such a sad happening."

"I know nothing," I replied gloomily, and yet my mind began to conjure up strange fancies.

"Did the sachet of which you speak so often contain anything very valuable?" she asked.

"That which I prize more than aught else," I replied.

"It must have been very precious then."

"Indeed it was"; and I was about to tell her what it contained, when I remembered that she was but a hot gospeller's daughter, and that therefore I could not speak to her of Rosiland. Nevertheless, I could not but think of her kindly, for her large grey eyes shone upon me in pity, and her voice was as sweet as music itself.

"Perhaps," she went on, "when you have more fully recovered, you will be able to recall many things, and then you will discover the thing which you desire. But I must go now, or my father will wonder why I am so long away."

"Nay, one minute more," I cried. "You will return again, will you not?"

"That I must," she replied with a smile, "else would you have no food. My father hath obtained the aid of an aged woman to be near you, yet it is I who will have to prepare your food."

"Then you are——" and here I stopped, for I knew not what to say.

"I am my father's only daughter," she replied.

"My mother died but two years ago, while he was in prison."

"In prison?"

"Ay, in prison. He in some way displeased the man who calls himself the Archbishop of Canterbury, and so he had to pay a fine which made him poor, and he was sent to prison for a year. During that time my mother died. We were living at Ely at the time, but when my father was liberated, and found that my mother was dead, he brought me to London, so that he might be able to preach the Gospel of Christ to such as are in darkness."

The maid said this quite simply, neither was there a trace of bitterness in her words; nevertheless, I who had been the servant of Laud resented what seemed a cruel deed.

With this she went away, but before long I heard heavy footsteps on the stairway outside, and a man clothed in sombre attire entered the room. He was, I should judge, about fifty years of age. Sometimes he looked older, for there were marks of suffering on his face. Again, however, he looked years younger, and might have passed for forty-five.

"Well, my son, you are better, I trust."

"Ay, I am better, thanks to you."

"Nay, thank God for leading me to you."

"Should I thank God also for leading me into such a plight?" I asked, for I somewhat resented his words.

"Perchance you ought, young man. Perchance God allowed you to be wounded, and robbed, that He might bring you to repentance. The Lord loveth whom He chasteneth, and scourgeth those whom He receiveth."

"While the villains go free," I rejoined.

"No villain will go free. Their sins will find them out, and their evil be made known."

"You believe that?" I cried eagerly.

"All sin will be punished," he replied solemnly. "It may be that for a time the eyes of the wicked stand out with fatness; yet is it but for a day, for they shall soon be cut off, and their place shall know them no more."

I was silent, for I wondered whether I owed my misfortune to Master Ralph Greenvil, or whether some one else wounded and robbed me when the panic took place in the inn yard.

"For that reason the children of God have a cheerful heart," went on Mr. Andrew Marlow, "for they know that God's ways are just, and that the Egyptians shall surely be drowned in the Red Sea."

"Who mean you by the Egyptians?" I asked.

"Who but they who would bring back the Scarlet Woman of Rome?" he replied. "Who but they who would make our land enslaved, and hinder the Word of God?"

"Do you mean the great Archbishop?" I asked.

"I mean all those who would make us deny our Lord," he replied. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Therefore shall not His people be enslaved."

I had it in my heart to answer him, but I remembered that I was there by his kindness, and it was not for the son of Sir John Falkland to be discourteous.

"But I must speak no more to you concerning these things," he said. "Doubtless you are not of my people. My daughter Rachel tells me that you have asked eagerly after the sachet that you have

lost. As this was also your cry when first I came upon you in the street, I judge the matter troubleth you."

"Ay, it troubles me much," I replied. "Whatever happens, I must find that sachet."

"Perhaps I may help you if you will tell me the circumstances which led up to the sad predicament in which I found you," he said kindly.

"How would that be possible?" I asked.

"My calling leads me into many strange places," he replied, "even among those who are of high degree. Therefore if you tell me what took place before I saw you, and the names of your companions, methinks I can, unknowing to them, discover the truth."

I looked into his face, and as I did so I decided to tell him my story. For although it was the face of a man who had suffered, it was also one of a man honest and true. No proof had I of this, and yet I was sure I saw it written there as plainly as words may be seen on a printed book. Mistaken he might be, but an evil man he was not. I therefore told him that I had but lately come from Cornwall to serve under my Lord Strafford, and that the sachet I carried near my heart was something I prided above all things. I did not tell him what it contained or who gave it me, and yet I imagined that he had some inkling of the truth concerning it. I also told him of the friendship I had made with Master Ralph Greenvil, and of many things he had said to me, neither did I hide from him the life I had been living in London, nor the companionships I had formed.

Presently, when I came to tell him of the scene in the inn, I saw that his eyes lit up with intelligence,

while a smile flitted across his face, but he said naught for some time. Then at length he said:

"I think it needs no Daniel to interpret to thee these things, my son. Nevertheless, it speaks well for thine heart that thou hast not imputed evil motives, nor condemned unheard. I will e'en make inquiries in a way that shall not implicate thee, neither shall they reveal thy present abode."

"You mean that you can recover my sachet?" I cried.

"I do not say that; but I have a shrewd suspicion as to who took it."

"Who?" I asked.

"I will not say, for fear I may be mistaken. But you need rest, young man. As Rachel hath told you, I have secured an aged woman to nurse you till you are well, and the physician will call to tend your wounds. So be of good cheer. No harm will happen to you here, for the power of Laud and his minions is fast dying. Therefore may I receive both friend and foe in safety."

After that I was left to myself, and naturally I fell to thinking, not only of my broken head and wounded side, but also of the great kindness of this man, Andrew Marlow, who had given me not only a home, but had heaped much kindness upon me.

It was not until late the next day that Master Andrew Marlow called to see me again, and I knew by the light in his eyes that he had news for me. Still, he spoke as I thought in riddles, for he kept on bidding me to beware of those who, under the guise of friendship, sought to do me harm.

"I have no friends save men of honour," I made answer.

"And who be men of honour?" he asked.

"Those who have good blood in their veins, and faithfully support King and Church," I replied.

At this he smiled like one who had pity in his heart.

"Nevertheless," he said, "I bid you beware of one who has an old name, and boasteth an honourable father. One who cometh from the West Country, and who telleth stories of his valour in distant lands."

"His name?" I asked.

"I will mention no names," he made answer. "Nevertheless, I have spoken to the innkeeper at whose house your trouble begun, and he hath confirmed my impressions. Let me ask you a question, young Master Falkland. In a few days you will be able to leave my house. Will you tell me what is in your heart to do?"

"Ay," I replied. "I shall go back to Sir Charles Waring, from whom I have taken my instructions since my Lord of Strafford hath left London, and make all things known to him."

"And you will fight for the King?" he said sadly.

"Ay," I replied proudly.

"Then will you soon be employed," he replied.

I looked at him questioningly.

"Ay, you will soon have command to march northward against the Scotch. But that is not for me to speak about; the will of the Lord hath not yet been made known. But, Master Falkland, I bid you beware of a man who professes to come from the West Country, and who met you in the town of Croydon."

"Why?"

"Because he seeks to do you harm. Watch him closely, and heed not his many words."

"You mean that Master Ralph Greenvil hath——"

"I bid you be careful, Master Falkland. Listen carefully, but say naught. It may be that you will be too late even now."

"Too late!"

"Ay, too late. It is said that those of southern blood are quickly angered, and naught is so difficult to deal with as a jealous woman."

I was silent for a minute, for a ghostly fear came into my mind.

"Who urged you to drink much wine?" he went on. "Who urged you to fight with one who boasts of being the best swordsman in England? Who, when you sought to escape fighting, made it impossible for one who believeth in the so-called code of honour to refuse to do so? Ay, and who hath inquired often and diligently concerning this same sachet, Master Falkland?"

"It cannot be!" I replied warmly. "A man of honour, the son of Sir Bevil——," but here I stopped, for I remembered many things which made me falter.

"I have made inquiries," went on Master Andrew Marlow, "and what I have told you is because of what I have heard. I tell you, you must look thither for knowledge of what you have lost, and if you be wise you will never again trust the man who, under the guise of friendship—and who speaks many vaunting words—seeks to supplant you."

After this I remained in Master Andrew Marlow's house many days. Right gladly would I have gone back to my lodging-place, but the physician would

not hear of it, for my wound was more dangerous than he first supposed. And yet I did not fret so much as I expected I should, for I was treated with great kindness and consideration. The old woman who had been called upon to nurse me treated me as if I was her own son, while Mistress Rachel Marlow visited me often, and cheered my lonely hours. In truth, she seemed to take great delight in speaking with me, and seemed anxious to make me believe in the tenets of her father's faith. In this, however, she made but little progress, for while I could see naught to object to in what she said, I told her that I wanted no religion save that which the King upheld. It is true it seemed reasonable that since the Bible had been given for our edification and instruction we should obey its precepts; moreover, I could not prove from the Bible that Master Marlow was wrong, yet did I close my heart against her words.

Presently the time came when I could with safety go back to my duties, and as I made preparations for going I thought Mistress Rachel became sad-eyed.

"You will not be again led away by these ungodly men?" she said.

"That will I not, Mistress Rachel," I replied. "Even although you may not convert me to your religion, yet have I learnt my lesson. Moreover, I may think of you as my friend, may I not?" I queried.

"If it pleases you," she replied, with downcast eyes.

"Some time I may see you wedded to a brave man," I said.

"That you never will," she replied, "although my cousin hath——"

Here she flushed more deeply, and stammered much.

"Your cousin, what of him?" I asked.

"Oh, he—he——but I do not love him," she answered.

"It was he who was with your father when he found me wounded?" I questioned.

"Ay, and he hath been much angered because—because you—that is, of course, my father could not do otherwise than befriend one who was wounded and in sore trouble."

"Your cousin loveth me not," I said.

"I may not say—but—but, Master Falkland, you will be very careful, will you not? Do not let him harm you. And—and I fear me he hath fallen away from our faith; he hath been seen often with the King's soldiers."

"You do not wish me to be harmed?" I said.

At this she fell to weeping like one who was sore distressed.

"Be comforted, Mistress Rachel," I said. "I will be very careful. I thank you very much for your kind will towards me. I trust that some day I will be able to make you amends."

"No, no," she cried passionately; "I seek nothing, desire nothing, save to comfort my father—but do not trust my cousin—and—and if ever I can serve you, I will."

"You have been a sister to me," I replied, "and I trust that in the future, when my hopes be realised, you will be able to come to my home and share my happiness."

At this her face became rosy red, and for some time she could not speak, whereupon I wondered what I had said to anger her.

Nevertheless, when I left the house I had nothing

but kindness in my heart for Master Andrew Marlow and his daughter, even if they were hot gospellers, for they had treated me with much kindness. Moreover, no man, whatever his quality might be, could have been a truer friend, or have helped me more in my trouble.

When I returned to Whitehall, however, and had told my story, I was led to think lightly of what I had passed through, for I was ordered to set out for York with the King's soldiers, for, so I was informed, the Scotchmen were preparing to march towards England in great strength.

CHAPTER X

TELLS HOW I WAS SUMMONED TO THE PRESENCE OF THE KING

THE day before I started northwards I was walking down Whitehall when I saw Master Ralph Greenvil, speaking with Reuben Pilcher, the cousin of Mistress Rachel Marlow; but no sooner did the latter see me than he hurried away into a side street like one afraid of being seen. Ralph Greenvil, however, came towards me with outstretched hands.

"Ah, Roderick," he cried joyfully, "it does my eyes good to see you again. Many inquiries have I made since that unfortunate night, but naught could I discover concerning you."

At this I made no reply, and I doubt not my countenance was dark; but he went on as if unheeding my looks.

"I can scarce forgive myself for what took place that night. Not that I can in aught blame myself, yet have I felt ill at ease. The truth is, Roderick, we both took more wine than was good for us, and when wine is in my head I love to see a fight. Besides, I could not stand by and see my friend insulted. That was why I urged you to measure swords. Oh, but I have troubled much. You know what Laud is about duels and brawling. You had

scarcely begun to have the best of the affair when Laud's minions came up, and of course we had to escape. I, of course, thought that you were with us, and when I found out my mistake I made my way back with all speed, only to find that you had gone. There have been all sorts of reports about you, Roderick. But tell me what hath happened, man, and inform me how you have fared."

"You know nothing, then?"

"Nothing, nothing. When I was told that the minions of the law were upon us, I escaped as I told you, and since then, until now, I have never set eyes on you."

There was a look of perfect honesty and sincerity in his voice as he spoke, and yet I had hard work to keep myself from calling him "liar."

"March you with us northward to-morrow?" I said.

"No, no. Troublous times have come upon us, Falkland, and my father is raising an army in the West. Therefore I return home without delay in order that I may join his standard. Maybe I shall call at the home of your father. Is there any message I can take him?"

At this my heart burned within me, for a great dread possessed me, but I said naught, save to say that I should march with the King's men the next day.

Now of what took place when the King's soldiers went to meet the Scotch there is no need that I shall tell. The story hath been told too oft. It is true Lord Strafford believed that we should be able to drive them back right easily, but any man with half an eye could see that our soldiers had no fight in them. Moreover, they were a godless lot, ill trained and worse equipped, and Lord Strafford was obliged

to confess that it would need at least two months to get them into anything like fighting order. The King was in despair at the course events had taken, and presently, when his Majesty realised that not only was Scotland in revolt, but that England likewise was on the point of revolution, he made terms with Montrose and the rest of them, while we, who longed to drive the rebels back across the Tweed, could do nothing but fret and fume, because we were treated like a parcel of fools.

It was during this time that I began to see the plight in which the King was ; moreover, I could not help realising that the people whom I called rebels had much to complain of. The best men in the country had been treated like mutineers and rogues, while Laud had driven hundreds of the most sober and God-fearing people which we possessed out of the land. I realised even then that the anger of the people was not so much against the King as against Strafford and Laud. The war was called the Bishop's war. People everywhere were demanding that Popery should be expelled from the land, and that each man should be able to pray and to teach according to the Word of God. Moreover, cries for reform, not only in the government of the Church but in the country generally were heard, and I, believing in the King as I did, was bound to admit that he had not met the people's lawful demands.

Still, as my father had said, the King could do no wrong, therefore did I turn a deaf ear to the cries I had heard, and maintained that we should obey him without question.

"The King will yield," men said on all sides. "He will have to obey Parliament after all."

"Never," I replied. "What! the King, the Lord's anointed, do the will of them who should obey him!"

"Ay," was the reply, "that he will, else will the whole people rise up against him."

"But there is no Parliament," I cried weakly.

"But there will be, and that right soon," was the reply.

After some days of weary waiting the hearts of some of us rejoiced again. The King called a Great Council of Peers at York, amongst whom was my uncle, Lord Falkland. But our hopes came to naught, for the nobles, almost to a man, so condemned the doings of his Majesty that he at length consented to call a new Parliament.

It was at that time that my mind became much confused, for I felt that those doctrines which my father taught me concerning the King were fast breaking down. I saw that not only could a King do wrong but that he had done wrong. Day by day it was pressed upon me, in spite of myself, that not only had the country been ill-governed during the eleven years that Charles had disregarded the claims of the people, but that he had aided not only my master Lord Strafford, but Archbishop Laud in tyranny, cruelty, and injustice. I had tried hard not to see this, but at last my eyes were opened, and I could not resist. Unjust taxes, unjust government, unjust punishments had been enforced on every hand.

It was but a bedraggled and spiritless crew that returned to London, and although many still shouted "For God and the King," it was easy to see that there was no heart in it all.

I had not been in London more than two days when, being in the vicinity of Westminster Abbey, I heard my name called.

"Master Roderick Falkland."

I turned and saw a plain-looking countryman, who I judged had come a long journey.

"Yes," I replied, "what do you desire?"

"I desire a moment's speech with you, young sir, and then to give you what hath been placed in my hand so that I might place it in yours."

"Your name, my man," I said quickly, for I had learnt to know the danger of having speech with strangers, and for the moment I could not remember him.

"Caleb Bray, from Launceston town, Master Falkland. Surely you have not forgotten me?"

"Ah," I cried, my heart all aflame, for I longed for news from home. "How long since you left Launceston?"

"But a week, Master Roderick. I came hither with Sir Edward Trelaske, whose steward I am, but before I came, and knowing you were in London, I made my way to your father's house, so that if he had any message to send I could be the bearer."

"Ay," I cried, "and you saw my father?"

"Ay, I did, and your mother also."

"And they were well?" I cried.

"Ay, they were in good health, although your father hath been much disturbed at the course events are taking."

"Saw you any one else?" I asked with a fast-beating heart.

"Ay, I saw two of your brothers."

"And—and the signorina, that is, Mistress Rosiland,

saw you her?" This I said stammeringly, because my heart fluttered so that I could scarcely speak.

"Of that presently, Master Roderick. I have come to London, as you see, and then when I found myself free I started in search of you. It was by the barest chance I found you so quickly."

"Ay, but my father, and mother,—and—and Rosiland, what did they say?" I cried.

"Many things, Master Roderick, many things," replied Master Caleb Bray. "Ay, but London is a strange place. All bustle, all shouting, all confusion. I thought I should never find you, I did. What with the fighting, and the swearing, and the drinking, it seemed like Bedlam let loose," and this he said in such a way that it seemed to me as though he were trying to avoid answering my questions. "Do you not think," he went on, "that life in London is like Summercourt Fair—all very well for one day, but bad if you have much of it?"

"That's as may be, Caleb Bray," I said, "but you have not given me the messages you told me you had brought. My father——"

"Thy father is all right, Master Roderick, except that——" Here he stopped, and began to look at the towers of the great church.

"Except what?" I asked.

"Nothing much, except that strange stories have reached Cornwall. It hath been said that thou hast been staying at the house of one of these Independents, a Separatist, an enemy to the King, and it hath made Sir John vexed."

"Who hath told my father this?" I cried angrily. "Tell me his name, and——"

"Hoity toity, Master Roderick. Take no notice

of such gossip, that is my advice; nevertheless, it behoves thee to be careful, for as thy father told me, if ever thou dost prove unfaithful to the King's party thou wilt never sleep in thy old home again."

"I must send a message to my father," I said; "I must explain that——"

"Explain naught. All these lies are found out in time; besides, he believes not in what hath been told; as for thy mother, she trusts thee entirely."

"Ah, what did she say to you, Caleb?"

"She told me to tell you that you must be afraid of nothing. That you must fear God and obey Him, no matter what the world may say. But, Master Roderick, excuse my boldness, but if I were you I would keep a sharp look-out concerning the foreign lady."

"What foreign lady?"

"The young maid that lives at your home. Am I right in thinking you paid court to her?"

"Why?" I asked.

"Because report hath it that she smiles on Sir Bevil Greenvil's son, Master Ralph. Thy brothers be sorely angry. Anyhow, he hath been much in the neighbourhood these last two weeks."

"Did you see her?" I asked, my heart becoming like lead.

"Ay, I saw her, and she gave me a packet for you."

"How came she to speak to you?" I asked.

"It came about in this way," said Caleb. "As I was walking up the lane, after having left the lodge gates, I heard some one calling me. I turned, and there stood this young maid, her eyes all aflame, and her cheeks as red as a peony.

"'Is it true that you go to London?' she asked.

"'Ay, to-morrow,' I replied.

"'Will you see Mr. Roderick Falkland?' she asked, and I thought her voice grew angry as she mentioned your name.

"'I have a letter for him which Sir John hath given me,' I made answer, 'therefore must I see him.'

"'Then will you be pleased to give him this,' she said, putting a package in my hand.

"'Ay, that I will. Is there anything I can say to him for you?' I asked; for of a truth, Master Roderick, I had seen you making eyes at the maid more than once.

"'No,' she said, 'I would not ask you so to demean yourself.'

"'Nay,' I made answer, 'I shall take it as an honour to take any message to Master Roderick.'

"'Then tell him never to put foot in Cornwall again,' she snapped; 'tell him that the very grooms at his father's house will refuse to speak to him.'

"'And why, mistress?' I asked.

"'Because he is a traitor,' she cried: 'a traitor to God, to his King, his father, and—and others.'

"At this she stammered, and for a moment I thought she would have cried outright. 'Tell him,' she went on, 'that he is found out.'

"'In what?' I asked, but she never spoke another word to me, and before I well knew what had taken place she ran down the lane like one bewitched."

"And the packet?" I cried, my head all dazed and my heart going like the clapper of a mill.

"I have them all here, Master Roderick." And he placed in my hand a package clumsily yet carefully tied.

After that he seemed desirous of staying with me for the sake of gossip, but I put him off with the promise that I would meet him the next day, whereupon I hurried to my lodging-place, in order that I might read in quietness what he had brought me.

Although I longed to read Rosiland's letter first, I did not do so. I was afraid. What Caleb Bray had told me had taken all the heart out of me, so I first read my father's message, and that with a sore heart.

There was but little in it, save what Caleb Bray had told me by word of mouth, and that was but a repetition of what he had said on my birthday.

"Be faithful to the King, and the King's cause, Roderick, or thou art no son of mine," he wrote. "There have been all sorts of rumours afloat, but concerning them I believe naught. Thou art my son, and therefore would not pay court to the daughter of a Separatist hot gospeller. If I thought that of thee I would set the dogs on thee if ever thou didst put thy nose inside my door. I send thee five pounds, for I know that the King, having fallen upon evil days, will not be able to pay his servants well. Be true to His Gracious Majesty, or may the curse of God rest on thee. I would rather see thee dead than that thou shouldst side with these so-called Parliamentarians."

This I read, and more of a like nature, until I felt like being a traitor in having even doubted the King's cause. After this I turned to what my mother had written, and a minute later I felt my manhood leaving me, for I was sobbing like a boy of seven. She said but little concerning the King, or the King's cause, but she besought me to be a man of God, and never to do aught of which I was afraid to think when I

said my prayers. "Remember, my dear boy," she said, "that your mother is praying for you, and asking God that you may be ever kept from sullying your soul. Trust God always, Roderick, and never be fearful of seeking His will, and of obeying it. Follow the light of God always, my little boy, and if that light be but a little gleam in the darkness, still follow it, and not be afraid. If you will do this, my dear, all will be well, and though all else may deride you, yet will neither your God nor your mother forsake you, or be angry."

Having read this I seemed in a strait betwixt two, for although I could not tell why, I felt that while my father urged me to do one thing, my mother's finger pointed the other way. And then I turned to the packet which Caleb Bray told me Rosiland had given him, for even although I devoured every word my mother had written, my fingers were itching to touch the paper on which my love had written, and that in spite of the cruel words she had uttered. For I called to mind the look in her eyes when we parted, and I could not believe that she meant the words she had spoken to Sir Edward Trelaske's steward. But this lasted only a minute, for when I had unfastened the cord a bangle, the only present I had given to Rosiland, fell upon the floor, and these were the words I read:—

"I send you back your present, that you may give it to the one to whom you gave my sachet. It will interest you to know that the things I gave you, with my letter, which you showed to your drunken companions, and of which you boasted, have been brought to me by a friend. This may surprise you, seeing that you gave them to a low-born woman, who

loves neither God nor country. Nevertheless, she for a bribe restored them to one who hath brought them to me. If you have any shame left you will not wonder that from this time I will not sully my lips with your name, neither will I think of you, save as one might think of a Judas, a Caliban. But perchance this will not grieve you; you will find your pleasure among your new friends. But one thing more will I say: never dare to come to your father's house again. If you do I must e'en tell him why I cannot speak to you; and even I would not care to see the dogs set upon one of whom I once thought with a loving heart."

That was all. The letter is on my table as I write, and even now my heart bleeds with the memory of what I felt then. That it was she who wrote it I could not doubt. The hand which wrote the love-letter, given me when I left my home, and that which wrote this was the same. For a time I could not understand what it meant, but it came to me presently. The hand that had robbed me of the sachet had also given it back to her with many lying words. Little by little I pieced the thing together. It was Ralph Greenvil to whom I had told the story of the sachet; it was he who had spoken to me oft concerning Rosiland Verona; it was he who had again and again asked that he might see it; it was he also who had on many occasions sought to make me drunk; and it was he who had urged me to fight on the doleful night when my trouble befell me.

But how did he know that I had been at the house of Master Andrew Marlow? Ah! I remembered. I had seen him with Reuben Pilcher, who, I was sure, loved me not.

"I will go home this very night," I cried. "I will saddle my horse even now, and ride him until he drops. I will go to Rosiland and tell her the whole truth, and then I will find Master Ralph Greenvil, and drive his lies down his throat with my sword-point. That lying, stealing blackguard shall die, even although I bring the wrath of King and Church around my ears!"

I began to think how I should tell my story, and ere long I planned it word for word. Then I bethought me how I should obtain leave from Lord Strafford. I reflected that the country was in a state of turmoil, and that even then the Parliament was being elected. Stories of vengeance and wild deeds were heard on every hand, while men had it that when Parliament came back they would see to it that the heads of both Strafford and Laud would be cut off. My master had given command that every faithful soldier must be ready for action whenever the need should arise.

"It does not matter," I vowed. "I will clear my name from calumny and lies; I will revenge myself on the man who hath betrayed me. If I receive not my lord's consent to do this, I will e'en go without it."

I started up to make preparation to do this when I heard a voice at the door.

"Who is there?" I asked.

"From the King," was the reply.

I opened the door, and saw a man who bore a letter.

"For me?" I asked sharply, for I scarce knew what I was doing.

"If that be your name," he replied.

A minute later the missive dropped from my hand in astonishment, for it was nothing less than a summons

to me to repair to the presence of His Majesty King Charles, and that without delay.

"Whither?" I asked, half mazed with excitement.

"Follow me," was the reply.

A little later I was in Whitehall, and presently I was led to the room where His Majesty was. I did not so much as wonder what he wanted me for, nor did I speak a word to the man who kept by my side.

I heard voices in the room, anxious voices I thought, but I paid little heed to them, for almost directly I was ushered into the presence of the King and two others.

CHAPTER XI

THE KING'S COMMAND

"THIS is the youth."

It was Lord Strafford who spoke, but I looked not at him—my eyes were turned towards the King, who gazed straight towards me. I suppose the fact that I had been brought before him in such a way must have wrought much upon me; yet do I remember that even then I thought of Rosiland Verona and of the way I would set myself right before her. Yet was His Majesty's presence brave, and moving to look upon. Moreover, the fact that he had been obeyed as King for so many years seemed to endow him with dignity. Even as I looked at him then, I saw that he regarded his will as all-sufficient to command obedience, and that disobedience would not only arouse his anger, but his sense of wonder. For the first time I felt what being in the presence of a king really meant, and I verily believe that had many of those who spoke lightly about his authority been brought before him as I was, they would have had all their disobedience driven out of their hearts in quick time. And this I say in spite of what followed. For a king is not only what he is, he is what men have thought of him. For the moment I did not think of him as a man—I thought of him as a king.

I realised all the homage, the adulation, the loyalty, the devotion which had been his; not because he was Charles Stuart, but because he had been elected by God to be the head of our people. Therefore all those doubts which had come into my mind after his yielding to the nobles in Yorkshire passed away like a morning's mist. I stood in the presence of God's anointed, and wondered how any man could doubt his right to command and be obeyed.

"What did you say his name was?"

"Roderick Falkland, Sire."

"And nephew of my Lord Falkland?"

"Yes, Sire."

"How long have you known him?"

"Since a week after the breaking up of the Short Parliament, Sire."

"That was in April, and now we are in October, on the eve of another Parliament," said the King gloomily.

"But it will be more obedient than that, or it will be as short, Sire," said Lord Strafford confidently.

I thought a look half of doubt and half of fear came into the King's eyes, but he replied not to Strafford's words.

"You have known him, then, a little more than six months?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Hath he undertaken works of importance? But no, that cannot be. He is but a boy, and can scarcely have seen service."

"Ay, but he hath, Sire," replied Strafford. "Before he had been a day in my service I did send him on a mission."

"Ah, Thomas Wentworth," said the King, with a

smile, "but thou art hot-brained. Ay, hot-brained; and yet art thou both wary and wise—and thou dost serve our interests too," he added with a smile. "But this boy, he served thee well?"

"Ask his Grace, Sire?" replied Strafford.

The King turned to Archbishop Laud, who stood near, and look at him questioningly.

"I have naught against him," replied the Archbishop. "His work came to naught, yet did he do it faithfully, and with sense."

"And so young. How old are you, Master Falkland?"

"But twenty-one last April, Sire," I replied.

"Thy father is a loyal gentleman, I have heard," he said, like one thinking.

"He bade me on the day I left home, that if ever I obtained the ear of your Majesty, to tell you of his faithfulness, as well as that of every Cornishman of gentle blood. He also bade me tell your Majesty that he himself could raise two hundred swords in case of need."

"That is well," replied the King, smiling. "I hope we may not need those brave swords, Master Roderick; yet will I not forget thy father's words."

"And the son is as loyal as the father, that will I swear," cried Strafford. "Not one of your Majesty's faithful soldiers fretted half so much as young Roderick here, that he could not join in the fight to drive the Scotch back beyond the Tweed."

Again the King sighed, while a look of anger came into his eyes.

"It is well," he replied presently. "When half my people rise up against me, it is well that the other half be faithful."

"Methinks more than half be unfaithful, Sire," said Laud. "I fear me much that when Parliament meets there will be but few to support the King's claims. That is why we must have help from elsewhere."

"Ay, but I like it not," said the King.

"And yet, Sire, the country is in revolt. Moreover, the fact that Her Majesty Queen Henrietta is so favourable to the Roman branch of the Church hath aroused these Puritans and Separatists to the greater anger."

"Do you think they would dare harm Lord Strafford and your Grace?"

"I feel sure they will, Sire. In truth, if they be not held back by fear, I do not believe that either my life or that of Lord Strafford will be worth a groat's purchase."

"But I give you my royal word, not a hair of your head shall be touched," cried Charles.

Laud shook his head sadly.

"What! do you doubt my authority? Do you think that Pym, or Hampden, or any of their followers, will dare disobey one of my lightest commands?"

"Think of the state of the country, Sire; think of what hath happened since the breaking up of the last Parliament; think of what the nobles said to you in Yorkshire. And even now, although Parliament hath not yet met, they be boasting of the changes which will come."

"Then I shall be no longer King!"

Both were silent.

"But this boy!" went on the King. "Was ever such an ambassador known?"

"The thing must be done secretly, Sire," said Strafford. "If it be known that your Majesty seeks

aid from France, or Spain, or Italy, then will these Puritans and Separatists become more determined than ever. Whoever doeth this must be a man who will attract no attention. Our every movement is watched, while it is already suspected that your Majesty is in communication with the Pope. I say if once the truth becomes known that your Majesty seeks aid from a Catholic country, then—well, I fear to think what might happen."

"But am I not King?" cried Charles.

"Doubtless, Sire; and we must see to it that your Majesty remains King."

"And you see no other way?"

"What other way can there be, Sire? The nation is in revolt. The Parliament will soon meet, and will be prepared with all sorts of demands. Unless we can gain help—then God help us all!"

"Then state your plans again plainly."

"They are easily understood, Sire? I have, as you know, thought of France; but Richelieu is, owing to his illness, little disposed to render help; while I know that Mazarin, who has just received a Cardinal's hat, hates us like poison. Then Spain dare not offer help for fear of France. But the Pope longs to obtain power in England again, and would, I believe, send us the help we need. Therefore I say this: send young Roderick Falkland—whom no one would ever suspect of going on such a mission—with letters to the holy Father, asking for his aid, and offering such assurances as I have before mentioned to your Majesty."

"But he would demand the subjection of England to the Roman See," replied Charles.

"Well, and what then, Sire," replied Laud; "better that than we should be ruled by Separatists. Besides,

I do not believe it need mean that. As your Majesty knows, I am not a Roman Catholic, although I have hopes that the time may come when Rome will make such concessions as will enable us to join them once more. But that may be a far cry. The Pope is a wise man, and he hath learnt that England cannot be forced. His predecessor, who encouraged Philip of Spain to send the Armada, did not know what he knows. Therefore will he be wary and wise. He will say in his heart, 'England is a rebellious family of children. One part of it fighteth against the other. If I help the head of the family to set the house in order, then will the whole family be grateful to me in after days; then also will they turn their hearts towards one who helped them in their dark days, and come back to their rightful father.'"

"Ay, and then I shall have a master," replied the King.

"We be not children, Sire; therefore will we not play into the hands of the Bishop of Rome. Be assured that we will know how to deal with him if ever he seeks to command. As we have often said, Sire, if the Pope would make certain concessions, which methinks he will not be loth to do, we were better united to the Papal See than to be at the mercy of these Puritans. Why, think of what hath taken place. I, even I, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of the Church of England, have been mobbed in my own palace, driven from it by a pack of yelping dogs. Such is the condition religion hath come to in your realms. Think you that such could be if the Catholic nations were our allies. As I have said, I am no Papist, and I have proved it both by sermon and by book; yet would

I rather make the Pope's concessions, and gain his protection, than be at the mercy of these Bible-quoting fanatics."

"Still, sympathetic as I am to the old faith, for the Queen's sake, if nothing else, yet would I not concede one iota of my authority, even to the Pope himself," said the King.

"Your Majesty," said Laud, "my one thought is that you may not only be King, but absolute King. Be assured, we will never give way on that point. Moreover, the Pope would never think of demanding it during your lifetime. Nevertheless, we must face facts. Will your Majesty remember that not one tax can we levy without the consent of Parliament, and that, in spite of your many loyal subjects, we have but a very thin purse. Moreover, I see plainly that the people are so determined, that the Parliament, when it comes back, will not yield one jot. And what doth that mean, Sire? It will mean that you will be King only in name. You who have reigned twelve years without a Parliament. True, we may defy Parliament, and the best blood of England will flock to your standard. But what then? Half the nation is against us. Now then, if these rebels hear that a force is coming to us from the Pope, then will they cease to rebel, and you will be master again. They will do your bidding, whatever that bidding may be; then, too, will the Church be governed as the Church should be."

"Let me again look at the document you have drawn up," said the King, with a sigh.

At this Strafford handed him some parchment, which he read carefully.

"It should be good," he said, like a man musing.

"It doth not tie our hands, and yet it seemeth to mean much."

"It is worded with great care, Sire," replied Strafford.

"But"—and the King turned towards me again—"this lad will be but a fool in Italy. He will not understand one word which may be spoken to him."

"Pardon me, Sire, but the youth speaks the Italian tongue with ease!"

"What! is it possible?" replied the King, smiling. "Surely such an accomplishment is uncommon among country boys. How did you learn the tongue, Master Falkland?"

At this my heart beat mightily, for I felt that my secret was like to come out.

"There liveth at my home an Italian maid, Sire," I made answer. "At least, her father was Italian, and she lived in Italy until she came to England as my father's ward. From her I learnt it, Sire."

"Her name, Master Falkland?" said the King.

"Her name is Rosiland Verona," I replied.

"Ah, and she is a relation of thine?"

"No, Sire," I replied, blushing.

"Ah, I have thy secret, Master Falkland. Well, we will see to that. If thou art faithful and discreet in this, I will see to it that, if this maid is worthy of thee, thou shalt have the desire of thine heart fulfilled. But stay, doth she love thee, Master Falkland?"

"I know not," I replied, for my heart was still sore at the letter she had written me. "I am afraid not, for some one hath been speaking evil of me to her, and she hath sent me a message full of anger."

"What meaneth this?" said the King. "Tell me thy tale fully."

At this I marvelled; for why, I asked, should he turn from affairs of such importance to hear the story of a country lad? Yet was this one of his traits. He was pleased to hear the love stories of those around him, because they helped him to forget the many vexing things which harassed him. So, even although he was considering means of retaining his kingly power, yet was he pleased to forget it so that he might listen to the trouble which pressed upon my heart.

"Ah, that is naught," he answered, when I had finished—"that is naught. I will see to it that all shall be made right, and if God smiles upon my cause, as assuredly He will, and if thou art faithful and wise, I will e'en wed thee to this maid, and, what is more, thy father's youngest son shall have both riches and honour. Nay, fear not, Master Roderick, many a younger son hath had preference to the elder, and there be many fair demesnes in England at my disposal—ay, and titles too. So be not cast down. Thou dost speak Italian, eh? Ah well, my Lord Strafford hath method in his madness, as Will Shakespeare said so well. But time presseth, and we must e'en act quickly."

"Ay, your Majesty," said Strafford, "no time should be wasted, and Master Roderick hath naught to detain him."

"Then shall he start to-morrow," said the King. "See to it that he leaves without attracting suspicion, for that would be fatal."

"That is one of my chief reasons, as I have told your Majesty, for choosing this youth. No one will dream that we send him to the Pope, any more than they would think we should choose Pym, or Hampden.

Already have I sketched a plan of his journey, and, if God wills, this letter will be in the hands of the Pope before the moon begins to wane."

It was at this moment that I realised the purport of all their speech. Up to now I had been well-nigh dazed at the thought of being in the presence of His Majesty, and of taking part in the King's counsels. Moreover, Rosiland's letter had acted upon me like a heavy blow, and kept me from thinking with clearness. Now, however, the meaning of all that had been said came to me like a flash of light. I realised that I was expected to take letters to the Pope of Rome, asking him to send soldiers to fight against my own countrymen; that I was the instrument chosen to induce an alien people to come and subdue those of my own blood. For while it seemed natural that the King should try and put down rebels, it hurt me sorely to think that Italians should fight side by side with the English against such men as Hampden and Pym. But more than that, I remembered that they were to be the Pope's soldiers, and my heart grew hard and bitter at the thought of it. Stories which Master Piper had told me concerning the condition of England when our land was under the dominion of the Roman Church came back to me. I thought of what happened in Mary's days; I remembered what Philip of Spain had vowed to do for England; ay, and I bethought me, too, that Philip's vessels which were sent filled with men and guns to subdue the English had been blessed by a Pope. And now Charles Stuart, King of England, was going to seek aid from another Pope, who longed to have us in his power again; while Laud, who had been accused of Popish practices, and who had earned the nation's

hatred because of his cruel deeds, was counselling him to do this thing.

I say all this came to me in a moment, and my heart sank like lead. How could I go to one who was an enemy to our freedom, and ask him to send soldiers to fight against those who were my own countrymen; ay, and those, too, who only lived and laboured for my country's weal?

In a moment my belief that a king could do no wrong was shattered. Although he stood before me at that moment—he the King, and I but a country youth—he seemed to me but a plotting tyrant. I could not do his bidding, I simply could not. Loyal to the King as I had been, I was still an Englishman, and I could not ask my country's enemies to fight against Englishmen.

It was then, moreover, that I realised my own position. How could I dare to refuse the King's commands? Neither he nor his Ministers had questioned my obedience; in truth, they did not seem to think that disobedience was possible! For who was I that I should dare doubt the King's will, much less oppose it? In truth, as may easily be seen, I was in sore straits.

Besides, my whole future depended on my obedience. If I refused, not only the anger of my father would rest upon me, not only would Rosiland scorn me more than ever, but I should know what the anger of the King meant. For let who will say otherwise, it is no light thing to oppose a King's will. I shuddered to think of it. To obey the King meant asking our enemies to fight against my people; it meant, say what they would, putting our country in the power of the Pope; it meant cruelty and slavery. But to

refuse meant eternal disgrace; it meant the loss of Rosiland; it meant her hatred and scorn; it meant my father's curse; it meant the anger of the King. And the King had promised so fairly. If I obeyed, Rosiland would be mine with honour and fortune; while if I refused, then I dared not think of what might befall. Besides, was not the King king? And had not my father told me many times that the King could do no wrong?

"Yes, Sire," continued Strafford, "all is prepared, so it needs but your signature to these documents, and then young Roderick Falkland can leave forthwith, and then before these rebels have time to make preparations they will know that an army is coming against them from another quarter."

"Thou canst be ready at once, Master Falkland?" said the King, smiling.

I had it on my lips to say yes. In truth, the word had well-nigh escaped me, when my mother's words came back to me: "Never do aught against your conscience, and remember that God must always be obeyed first."

"Will your Majesty be pleased to listen to me?" I said tremblingly.

The King turned upon me sharply, as though he suspected me of disobedience, but the thought that I would be guilty of such a course seemed to leave him at once.

"Ah, do not fear, Master Falkland," he said: "thou shalt have all things necessary for thy journey. I am not so thoughtless about a youth's necessities as that!"

This made it harder than ever to speak, and yet I spoke my words plainly.

"If it please your Majesty, I would rather you would not send me on this mission."

"What!" cried Strafford and Laud, both together. "You refuse!"

As for the King, he started to his feet like one in great anger.

I made no answer, but stood before them trembling. Yet did my heart beat bravely, for I felt I was obeying the commands of God. I knew what I must expect, for I saw my fate in the King's eyes; yet now that I had spoken my words I would not have withdrawn my reply, even if I could.

"'You refuse to do our bidding?' said the King, after a moment of silence."
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CHAPTER XII

"THE KING CAN DO NO WRONG!"

"You refuse to do our bidding?" said the King, after a moment of silence.

I remained silent, for what could I say?

"Answer me, sirrah!" continued his Majesty sternly. "Yes or no."

"I could not undertake such a mission to your satisfaction, your Majesty," I replied.

"And why?"

"Because my heart would not go with my work, Sire," I replied; "and therefore I could not zealously perform it."

"Not when it is my will?"

"I grieve to offend your Majesty, but, Sire—I—I could not do this thing."

"And this is your loyal henchman, my Lord Strafford," said the King, turning scornfully; "this is the brave youth on whom you set such store; this is the result of your training."

"Oh, pardon me, your Majesty," I cried, for every word the King spoke burnt me like hot iron; "I desire not to be disobedient, but—but how can I, an Englishman, go to one who is an enemy to my country, and to the liberty of my people, and ask him to send

soldiers to fight those who, however mistaken they may be, still seek England's good?"

"And who is the best judge of these things," cried Laud, "His Majesty and His Majesty's ministers, or you, an ignorant stripling?"

"Doubtless I am both foolish and ignorant," I replied; "nevertheless, I cannot do what my conscience condemns. I could never hold up my head again if I helped to bring the soldiers of an enemy into our land."

"Who said His Holiness was our enemy?" cried the Archbishop.

"Every Pope hath been the enemy of England since King Henry," I replied; "and although I am but an ignorant boy, I could not take part in selling my country to one who seeks to enslave us."

How I dared to say this I know not. Yet did the words escape me, as it were, in spite of myself. I heeded not the fact that by speaking them I was indirectly accusing the King of being false to the nation over which he ruled, or that I also told him that I was more faithful to England than he. I simply spoke them because my heart urged me to speak them, and my lips could not but obey.

"And the King's will, sirrah!" cried Laud; "is that to go for nothing? Do you dare to oppose your thoughts to the King's slightest desire?"

"Enough, enough," said the King. "We cannot waste words on a malapert boy. Methinks enough hath been said already."

"Too much, your Majesty," responded Strafford.

"Too much?" said the King haughtily. "How, my Lord Strafford?"

"We have spoken freely of our plans, because

I vouched for this youth's loyalty and devotion," replied Lord Strafford. "Therefore, seeing he hath dared to question your Majesty's will, too much hath been said."

"Speak more freely," said the King.

"I mean," went on the King's chief minister, "that if this boy breathes one word of what he hath heard, it would be like putting a match to a powder magazine. It would arouse these malcontents as they have never been aroused before; it would place more power in the hands of Pym; it would give them reason to rebel more openly than they have yet rebelled. Nay, if there be but a whisper of this, not only would the people wreak their vengeance upon your faithful advisers, but even your Majesty's person would not be safe."

"You mean that they would dare to touch the person of their King!" cried the King.

"I mean that what we have said would be spouted by these Parliamentarians in every county in England; it would be the first thing discussed at their meeting. They would say even more than this boy hath said. They would say that your Majesty had sold your country to its enemy, that you might have your way."

"Surely there is no need to discuss this, your Majesty," said Laud. "The boy is but a boy, of whom no one takes account; therefore——" And the Archbishop shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"But in these days the people demand a trial, even for the most insignificant," replied the King; "and in that trial——" Here the King hesitated.

"Pardon me, Sire, for interrupting you," said Laud; "but why a trial? What! grant a trial to a saucy boy!"

"No, no," replied Charles; "he is the son of an honourable man, and bears a good name, therefore must he not die in such a way."

"Your Majesty hath prisons," replied Laud, with a grim smile. "Prisons so dark that no man may see, so deep that no man may escape. Will your Majesty leave this matter to me?" and even as he spoke I saw his eyes travel towards the door, as if he wondered if it were safely locked.

The King spoke no word, but went into another apartment, while I stood like a man dazed, wondering what was to happen next, even while Strafford gazed on me with, as I thought, a look of pity in his eyes.

I looked around me with a vague thought of escaping, and then I realised that I was in the room where I had first seen Lord Strafford. Before I could fairly collect my senses, the secret door at the side of the room, of which I have spoken before, opened, and two men entered.

Neither Lord Strafford nor the Archbishop spoke a word, but both looked at the men, and then at me. A moment later I was pinioned, and dragged through the secret aperture, where I found myself in pitch darkness.

I have a vague recollection of being dragged along through the darkness, and I call to mind even now that the air I breathed smelt of mildew, but beyond that I remember little. In truth, the whole matter seems to me like a dream of darkness. Moreover, the past seemed far away. My meeting with Caleb Bray might have happened years before, while even the letter which Rosiland had written me appeared a thing of long ago.

I could not explain why this should have been so,

but so it was. As I stumbled on in the darkness, while on each side of me walked my unseen gaolers, everything seemed to change. I felt as though I were not Roderick Falkland at all, but some other man who had been discovered in a hideous crime. But what that crime was I could not realise.

Presently, I know not how long after, I thought the air seemed purer, while I fancied I saw gleams of light piercing the darkness; but of this I was not sure, for I was dazed by the experiences through which I had passed.

"Now then, go in there."

This was what one of the warders said to me, and without a thought of disobeying I entered a gloomy cell, which, although dimly lit, and desolate beyond description, seemed to me a very haven of rest. I knew not why, but I felt very weary. I wanted to rest; I wanted to be alone, so that I could think.

A little later I was alone. My sword was taken from me, but I retained all my clothes. For this I was glad, because the air was cold, and I was glad of my thick cloak. No man spoke to me; in truth, no one was near me. A great silence pervaded everything, and for aught I knew I might be twenty fathoms beneath the earth.

After a time my scattered senses returned to me, and I was able not only to take note of my surroundings, but to think of all through which I had passed. I saw that my prison was lit by a shaft of light, which came to me through a narrow iron grating; nevertheless, the grating was far away from the open air, for, on looking through it, I saw a long hole, which, as I imagined, led to some yard or alley. Be that as it may, the light which came through this

hole was sufficient to enable me to see the kind of place in which I was.

On the whole I was not badly housed. The cellar, for so I judged it to be, was clean and dry. The floor was of clay, but was covered with a thick layer of straw. The walls were of huge solid masonry, such as would be placed at the foundation of a large building; while the door, as I judged, was thick and of great strength.

I did not dream of escape, it seemed so utterly impossible; rather, I fell to thinking of what had happened, and of what the upshot of the whole matter might be. Ere long the whole of the business was clear to my mind, and I was able to form conjectures concerning my future. When put in plain words, moreover, everything was easy to understand. I had been brought before the King in order that he might see me, and that I might receive his commands to go to Rome and convey His Majesty's messages. Because of my insignificance, and because I knew something of the Italian speech, I had been chosen rather than some person of importance, whose departure would have aroused suspicions. Never doubting my refusal to do this, the question had been discussed in my presence, and then, when I had refused to be an instrument whereby my country should be delivered into the hands of the Pope of Rome, I at the same time became a danger to the King, as well as to Strafford and Laud. As a consequence, I was to be kept in confinement until such time as I should cease to be of danger.

But what was to become of me? Did they intend to starve me? Should I die there all alone? At first I feared this greatly, for I knew that I had been

imprisoned at the behest of Archbishop Laud, and that he was reported to be a man without mercy. Still, I could not believe this for long. It seemed to me impossible that any man could in cold blood condemn another to such a doom. Besides, I reflected that the Archbishop was reported to be cruel only on matters of religion. Men said that it was only when he was opposed on matters ecclesiastical that he became merciless.

Concerning Rosiland and my father, however, I lost all hope. I felt sure that news would in some way reach their ears that I had refused to obey the King, and that as a consequence the doors of Trecarrel would be for ever closed against me.

And yet I would not even then have recalled one word I had spoken. I felt that I had not sold my birthright for the King's smile, and that while I still desired him to be King in his own country, I could not go to those who sought to bind us in slavery, and ask them to come, and if needs be, fight against such men as Pym and Hampden and Cromwell.

Strange as it may seem, I presently felt drowsy, and by-and-by I fell into a deep slumber, from which I was awakened by some one entering.

"He's asleep," I heard one say.

"He looks a fine, well-grown lad," said another; "to look on him no one would think he was mad."

"No, he looks peaceful enough."

"Is he dangerous?"

"I believe he hath been, but is not so now."

"But if he is mad, why is he not put to Bedlam?"

"Nay, I know not. There be many strange things done in these days. All we have to do is to obey

orders. We must give him food and guard him safely."

"How long hath he been here?"

"I know not. I received my orders concerning him but an hour ago."

"What is his name?"

"Thomas Bolitho; but I am told that he calleth himself by different names."

"Is he of gentle blood?"

"Ay, I expect so. See, his clothes are of the best, and I am told that he must be treated kindly. Moreover, we must pay no heed to what he saith, because he speaks without reason."

I made no movement during this time, for I was anxious to hear what they were saying. I saw the meaning of their speech without difficulty, and, in truth, I was much relieved thereby.

"Come, wake up, master, here's food and drink."

I started up quickly, and looked around me.

"Where am I? Who are you?" I asked, rubbing my eyes.

"Look at him, poor lad. He knoweth not where he is," one of them whispered.

"Oh, you are all right, and I have brought you food. Look at it. Here is steaming hot broth. Eat it before it is cold."

Both were men of middle age, and, as far as I could judge, they were kindly disposed towards me.

I ate the food they brought me, after which I was more my own man again. Neither the darkness nor the loneliness oppressed me so much as before. Moreover, I felt no fear for the future, for I was filled with a great hope that I should in good time be freed

from my prison, and be able to make myself right with my judges.

Not that I dared to hope that Rosiland Verona would ever smile on me again—that seemed impossible; neither did I believe my father would in the days to come call me his son. Nevertheless, I did not believe that my mother would condemn me. If I had been true to naught else, I had been true to her behests.

For a long time nothing happened to me. Day followed day, and night followed night. Food and drink were brought me, so also was a bed on which I could lie. Moreover, my gaolers rendered me many services which I did not expect. Therefore had I much to be thankful for.

I said but little to those who visited me. Why should I? I knew why I was there, and I knew, too, that I should not be able to escape while it pleased the great Archbishop to keep me there. I saw, too, that I was regarded as a madman, harmless while kept there, but dangerous if I escaped and was brought into contact with my fellowmen. I gave no hint to my gaolers why I was there; doubtless they would have only laughed if I had told them. They called me Master Thomas Bolitho, and I answered to my name.

And yet, as I look back, I know there was a great happening to me. I imagine that but few can point to a date, or even to a given period, when they changed from boys to men. To most men the change comes slowly. It is a matter of years. Just as the leaves come on the trees in the springtime, the growth is almost imperceptible. The green begins to appear in April, and spread in May, until before June

has passed away there is a fulness of foliage. But there is no day on which we can say of the tree, "To-day it has changed from the promise of spring to the glory of summer." Yet this is what happened to me. I went into the King's presence a boy, yet before that day ended I was a man. And I think the hour when the change came was when it was upon my lips to say, "Yes, your Majesty," to the King's command, but when I had said, "No, Sire," instead. For that night, as I lay alone in my cell, all things became different. I was more calm, more confident, more strong. My judgment was clearer, too. I could piece things together, and I could consider issues. Hitherto, I felt that I had been largely a creature of impulse, now I knew that other forces had entered my life.

When I had been in prison a few days, I asked that I might be allowed a Bible to read. This my gaolers brought to me, although they told me they had difficulty in doing so. After this, I went every day to the little grating and read the wondrous story which had been given to us. This Bible I read through more than once, weighing each word carefully, and as I read, even my loneliness became pleasant. I do not call to mind any distinct impressions made upon my mind, and yet the thing I most wondered at was that I had ever believed in the rights of either King or Bishop to rule with absolute power. Moreover, as I read the story of those early days of the Christian Church, and compared the life and teaching of the Apostles with the claims of Archbishop Laud, I was simply amazed. Moreover, those things which Laud fought so sternly for were not mentioned in the New Testament at all. I saw that

Laud, and the Bishops he had appointed, strove for power, for dignities, for the smile of the King, and for the honour and obedience of men, while Peter, and James, and John, and Paul, and the rest of the Apostles sought only to tell the story of their Lord, never dreaming of preferments, or of honour.

I saw, moreover, that the pretensions of the Bishops concerning priestly powers were altogether unthought of. They were too eager to preach the Gospel ever to trouble about such things; in truth, they did not seem to come into their minds. Another matter also became clear to my mind, and it was that all I had been taught concerning the Church was not to be found in the New Testament. I saw there that the Church consisted of those who were converted from their sins, and who gave their hearts to their Lord, until it became clear to me that the things which Laud struggled for were simply the pretensions of men.

I say all these things came to me slowly; they entered my being, and became a sort of consciousness, so much so that I wondered how I could have been so foolish in the past.

After a long and weary time, I noticed as my gaolers entered that they were much wrought upon. They talked eagerly together, and seemed to pay no heed to me at all.

"Hath aught happened?" I asked.

"Ay, ay, much, Master Bolitho."

"What?" I asked.

"The great Earl of Strafford is dead," was the reply.

"Dead!"

"Ay! He died to-day. Beheaded."

"Beheaded!"

"Ay, beheaded."

"By whom?"

"By Parliament. I do not understand it. But it is said he was found guilty of crime and treason towards his country. It is said that the King promised that not a hair of his head should be touched—but what then? The King is no longer king."

"What day o' th' month is it?" I asked presently in a confused sort of way, for I was well-nigh dazed by what I had heard.

"Day o' th' month, Master Bolitho! Hast thou sense eno' to want to know that? Well, it is the twelfth."

"The twelfth of what?"

"Ay, poor lad. I forgot that thou knowest naught here; in truth, I thought thou wert so eager after thy Bible reading that thou cared for naught. It's the twelfth of May, lad, and the whole town is on fire. Everywhere in the streets the people be crying joyfully, 'His head is off! His head is off!'"

"Died he like a man?" I asked.

"Ay, that he did. People say that when judgment was passed he said, 'I know how to look death in the face, and the people too. I thank God I am no more afraid of death, but as cheerfully put off my doublet at this time as ever I did when I went to bed.'"

"He was a great man, a strong man," I said.

"Thou speakest like one who knew him," said the gaoler.

"Ay, I knew him," I made answer.

The man looked at me steadily for some time.

"Thou dost not speak like a Bedlamite, Master Bolitho," he said.

"Neither am I," I replied. "Have I during the time I have been here acted in aught like a man mad?"

"Nay, thou hast not. But that goeth for naught. I was told long ago that thou wert as cunning as the devil, and had a thousand tricks to make folk believe thou wert in thy right senses."

"That is why you have refused to say aught to me, is it not?" I asked.

"Ay," he replied, "that is why. But of a truth thou dost not act like a man mad."

"Neither am I," I said again. "I am kept here wrongfully, and if you will get me away from here you shall be rewarded liberally."

At this he laughed like a man in great glee. "Just as I was told," he cried. "Thomas Bolitho is not your true name, I suppose."

"No, it is not," I replied.

"Ah! ah! Just as I was told. All the mad folk be the same. Cunning as foxes, cunning as foxes. Nay, nay, Master Bolitho, the country may be upside down, but I'll not get myself into a mess by letting you outwit me. Here you were sent, and here you will stay."

After this my gaolers would say naught to me, and I, in spite of all my endeavours, could do naught to forward my escape. I thought long and hard, but in no way did I see how I could gain the ear of the world outside. Now and then would the gaolers tell me something of what was going on, but when I asked that some message might be taken from me, they would either laugh loudly, or say with a

shrug of pity, "Poor Tom fool, he's better off where he is."

As may be imagined, this was hard to bear. I remembered that I had been eight months in prison, yet was I still kept mewed up like a rabbit in a warren.

Presently I was told that the King had gone to Scotland, and that report had it that he was doing everything the Scotch asked him, and after this I heard of terrible scenes in Ireland, but when I asked for particulars I could learn nothing.

After this a long time passed wherein naught happened to me, neither did I hear of aught that passed, until one day a gaoler told me that five members of Parliament, with "King Pym" at their head, had defied the King, and that, although orders had been given for their arrest, naught was done for fear of the people, who drove the King's soldiers before them. He also told me that the King had left London in order to prepare for war.

A little later the very air I breathed seemed to tell me that much was stirring; besides, my gaolers seemed far less inclined to laugh when I told them that I was not imprisoned for madness, but for another reason of far greater import to those in high places. Little by little I gained their confidence, and although they turned a deaf ear when I asked them to help me to liberty, they nevertheless seemed kindly disposed towards me.

"There is war, war everywhere," one of them said to me, "but it will soon be over, and the King is still king. I tell you, Master Bolitho, I have tried to do something for you, for I spoke to Master Humphry Carew concerning you, but he told me afterwards

that you must be guarded safely. It was the King's will. Ay, I was sure at the beginning that you were no ordinary Bedlamite."

"Is Lord Falkland still in London?" I asked.

"Why, Master Bolitho?"

"If you will take a message from me to him, you shall be rewarded."

"Nay, nay, I know my orders, and I know which side my bread is buttered. I tell you I should be found out. Not but what I would like to help you if I could."

Presently I noticed a still greater change in the one who had been most friendly. He talked with me on religious matters, and before long he told me that he had been to a preaching where a most learned and godly man had held forth, named Master Andrew Marlow.

"Know you him?" I asked eagerly.

"I have spoken to him twice," he replied.

"Will you take a message from me to him?" I asked, my mind full of strange hopes.

"Nay, I cannot, much as I would wish," he made answer.

"But you could see that he got a letter, if I wrote him one," I said eagerly.

At this he made many objections, but at length he brought me materials for writing, whereupon I wrote this man, telling him of my condition, and asking him if he could help me.

CHAPTER XIII

WHITHER THE GLEAM LED

THE next two days I spent in a great state of excitement. It is true nothing might come of the letter I had sent to Master Andrew Marlow; nevertheless, I felt sure that if it were in his power to help me he would. In the letter I had written I asked him to acquaint my uncle, Lord Falkland, of my long imprisonment, and also besought him to urge my uncle to come to me with all speed, as I could acquaint him with matters of grave importance. If, as I was informed, the King's power were weakened, while Laud, owing to the growing power of Parliament, no longer had authority, it would be easy to give me my liberty. Therefore I was on the tiptoe of expectation for some messenger of importance, and even went so far as to believe that possibly my uncle might himself come to me.

But two days passed and naught happened, whereupon, as may be imagined, I was well-nigh in despair. For although my gaolers were kind to me, they yet guarded me closely; neither indeed did I know how, even if I escaped from my prison room, I could get away from the great building of which it formed a part. For, as I have said before, I knew not where I was, except that I judged I could not be more than half a mile removed from Whitehall.

On the night of the second day, after my supper had been brought to me, I spoke to the gaoler who had been to hear Master Marlow's sermons, and asked him if he had received an answer to my letter.

"Go to bed, Master Bolitho," said Abel Grigg, the gaoler. "I do not say undress; but go to bed, and make no noise."

This, as may be imagined, set me wondering finely, for I thought I saw a meaning in the man's words. Moreover, he spoke like a man who feared, and who had a burden resting on his mind.

It must have been, as far as I can judge, about midnight that same night when I heard a noise of whispering outside the door, and a minute later there was a sound of the grating of a key in the lock.

"A visitor, Master Bolitho," whispered Abel Grigg. "Ten minutes can I give you, and no more. Speak not loud, and may the Lord have mercy on my soul."

My visitor was shrouded from head to foot. This I saw by means of the lantern which had been brought. But, truth to tell, I was too much wrought upon to ask a question. And this all the more because Abel Grigg had gone away and left us together. Strange as it may seem, not a word did either of us speak for well-nigh a minute, for although there was many a thing in my heart to say, I felt like a man tongue-tied. Who would have spoken first I know not, had not I seen my visitor all of a tremble, as though in great fear. And this led me to see that this was not a man as I expected, but a woman. In an instant my heart was all aflame. There was only one woman in all the world to me, and I called out her name.

"Rosiland!" I said.

At this I heard a sob.

"I am not of that name, Master Falkland," said a woman's voice; "but, nevertheless, I will do aught to serve you."

"Ah," I said, and I doubt not my voice betrayed my disappointment, "you are Mistress Rachel Marlow."

"Ay, Master Falkland. Abel Grigg did come two nights ago to my father's preaching; but, as it came about, my father was detained from coming, and another preached the Word instead. Therefore was the letter you wrote delayed in the delivery. Even yet it hath not reached my father, for he hath gone to Ely, from whence he will not return for three days; but I dared to break the seal, and I have persuaded Abel Grigg to conduct me hither. Can I do aught for you, Master Falkland?"

At this I thanked the maid warmly for seeking to help me, whereupon she fell to weeping, as I thought without cause. So I took her hand, and bade her be cheerful. I told her that I had been well treated, and that the wounds from which I suffered when I was at her father's house troubled me not one whit.

Upon that she seemed, as I thought, more overwrought than ever; but presently she mastered herself. Nay, she even threw off her headgear, and revealed the kind, thoughtful face I have described in an earlier part of this history. Even then, moreover, excited as I was by her visit, and wondering if she knew of some means whereby I might escape, I thought how fair she was to look upon. Besides, I could not help feeling kindly towards her, for had she not, at great risk, come to visit me in my loneliness?

"I came to tell you," she went on presently, "that

I could take no message to Lord Falkland, for he is not in London; but if you will give the name of another to whom I may take your message, then will I do it with gladness."

"As to that," I said, "I can give the names of many to whom I am known; but it may do no good, for I know not what their views may be. If my endeavours to find a means of getting out of this prison do reach Archbishop Laud's ears it will go harder with me than ever."

"Do you not know?" she said, like one astonished.

"Ay," I replied, mistaking her meaning. "I know that Lord Strafford is dead. But think not that this will alter Laud. He is a man who never forgives and never forgets."

"But surely you know? He is in the Tower!"

"In the Tower?"

"Ay."

"A prisoner?"

"Ay, a prisoner. The Lord hath closed the mouth of the lion; He hath given His children liberty."

"Since when?"

"Since before the anniversary of the Birth of our Lord."

"Since before Christmas," I cried; "then——"

"Ah! but think not that his power hath altogether gone. It is said that he hath still many who do his will, and seek to carry out his plans. It is also said that the King still follows his advice. Nevertheless, we have more freedom, and although many believe he will soon be back to power again, and therefore act warily, yet do we not walk in fear of our lives as before."

"And the King?"

"It is said the King hath fled, and that all things are done according to the will of Parliament."

"Then," I cried, "if Parliament knew that I was imprisoned because of the anger of Laud and Strafford, they might——" But I did not complete the sentence, I was so angry with Abel Grigg and Felix Snell for not aiding me to escape.

"And who are they who be heart and soul with Parliament?" I asked.

"There is Master Hampden, and Pym, and Sir Harry Vane, and my Lord of Essex," she replied.

"And is my Lord Essex in London?"

"Ay, so I hear."

"Could you take a message to him?" I asked.

"I could at least try, Master Falkland," she replied.

"Then gain his ear," I said. "Tell him that the son of Sir John Falkland, Roderick by name, was thrown into prison with the King's consent by Strafford and Laud, and that for many months he hath been kept like a rabbit in a warren."

"Ay, I will do that, Master Falkland."

"Thanks, Mistress Rachel, thou art kind to me. Perchance some day I shall be able to show how much I treasure such kindness."

"And is there any other message, Master Falkland?" And at this I thought her eyes were sad and wistful.

"Nay," I said, "that is enough. If but the noble Earl knows of this, he will sèe to it that I am given my liberty."

"And then you will be happy, Master Falkland?"

"As to that, no," I made answer.

She looked at me as if to question me further, but I told her nothing more. Each day my heart had

grown sorer at the thought of losing Rosiland, for I felt sure that I had lost her, and I could not bear to tell even this kind-eyed maid of my trouble.

Besides, just at this time I heard Abel Grigg's voice, telling me that it was time my visitor departed, and a few minutes later I was alone again. But now hope had indeed come into my keart, for I felt that when my story reached the ears of the Earl of Essex I should be set free, and that without delay.

Nevertheless, I was much angered with Abel Grigg for not telling of what had happened to Laud, and when he came to me in the morning I asked him why he, who professed kindly feelings towards me, had left me in such a plight.

"Of a truth, Master Bolitho," he replied, "I was strictly commanded not to have speech with you. I was told, moreover, that if you escaped the Archbishop would never forgive me. And I was afraid of him—ay, and I am afraid of him now, even although men say he is in prison. I tell you, I often wake of a night out of pure fear that he will find out what I have done."

"Why, what have you done?"

"Done! I have gone and heard the preaching of these Separatists, and while I have become a new man through the preaching of the Word, yet do I fear that man."

The fellow seemed so fearful that I could say naught more; besides, my heart was so full of hope that I could not long be angry with the man.

It was evident that Mistress Marlow's mission to my Lord of Essex was conducted with all speed, for the next day I was set at liberty, and that with so much ease that it seemed a wonder why I should

have been kept in prison at all. Moreover, I was immediately taken before Lord Essex, who questioned me closely concerning all that had taken place.

When I had told him what I knew he became very grave.

"I tell you, Master Roderick," he said solemnly, "a reckoning day is coming, and that right speedily. I suspected that these men thought of seeking aid from the Pope, but we had no proof of it. Ah! it was just like Strafford and Laud to advise sending thee on this mission, especially Strafford. But he hath paid his debts—he hath paid his debts! And now, Master Falkland, what dost thou propose doing?"

At this I was silent, for, as may be imagined, I was not only ill-informed as to how matters stood, but my head was well-nigh dazed by all I had gone through.

"Wilt thou return to thy father's house?"

"That I cannot do," I replied. "My father would drive me from his door." And then I told him of all my father had said.

"Ay," he replied gravely, "it would be a sad home-coming for you."

"I had thought of going to my uncle," I said presently.

"His position is untenable," replied the Earl.

I looked up at him questioningly.

"Ay, it grieves me to say it," he went on. "Thine uncle, Lord Falkland, believes in Parliament, but he will not abide by consequences. This is no time for make believe, Master Roderick. Either we must side with Parliament or the King—ay, and either we must fight with the Parliament or with the King."

"Doth this mean war?" I asked.

"Ay, it means war. For years the clouds have been hanging over our heads; for years we have been trying to avert this,—but it hath come at last. The King's word is no more than a rotten straw, his promises are of no more weight than the threat of a puling child. Again and again he hath deceived us. He is as slippery as an eel. He makes promises only to evade them. And now any day there may be an outbreak."

"You mean that you have armed against the King!" I cried, for even although I had tried to familiarise myself with the thought, his words came to me with a shock.

"Ay, I mean that. That is where your uncle and I do not agree. He sides with Parliament, and yet he wishes to avoid open rebellion to the King. But it is no use, Master Falkland. The King will not yield, and if we yield to him, then the Lord have mercy upon us! Therefore are we prepared."

"But if the King goes to battle himself," I said, "will you oppose him? Will an Englishman strike his King. Will he seek to make His Majesty a prisoner?"

"God forbid!" he cried fervently. "I pray we may not come to that. My hope is that when His Majesty sees that we are determined, he will yield, and that our country will be governed peaceably and righteously. Nevertheless, it behoves every Englishman to take sides. And remember this, every man who goes to the King's banner aids and abets tyranny, lies, and corruption—I say it solemnly—while Parliament stands for justice, and the rights of the people."

The issues were clearly before me. I had been long enough in London to know what they were, and my course was as plain as it could be made. And yet the choice was hard to make. If I did that which I felt was right I should receive my father's curse, I should be for ever homeless. Moreover, the breach which already existed between myself and Rosiland would be made impassable.

Every human tie, everything I fondly hoped for said to me, "Join the King's standard, and seek to atone for your disobedience by fighting for his claims." My rearing was all in this direction; it was my father's express command, it was the creed which I had been taught to believe from my earliest childhood. I felt sure, moreover, that only by doing this could I again win Rosiland's smile. Besides, was it not right to cry, "For God and the King"; ay, and was it not treason of the worst sort to join the rebels?

But I knew, even then, that I could not do this. Argue as I would, I knew that the King's cause meant oppression and injustice. Ay, and it meant a further reign of Laud.

"My lord," I said at length, "can you make use of me? Can you give me a place under your standard?"

It was hard to say, but I said it, and that was how I became what some called a rebel.

Now concerning what happened for many months after this I will not write in detail, for it is not the story of the war which I have to tell, but my own story. Besides, others, a hundred times better trained in pencraft than I—ay, and knowing far more of the issues of the strife—have already told it. I need only

say, therefore, that after some little time which was allowed me to recover my strength after my imprisonment, I was enlisted under the banner of Essex, who was made Captain-General of the Parliamentary forces. It was at this time that I again fell in with Sir Faithful Fortescue, who had ceased to be a King's man, and had joined the Parliamentary party. But I never had faith in him, for I saw that all the time he was half-hearted, and feared to strike a blow against the King. Nor was I surprised when he with his whole regiment deserted us, and practically went over to the King's side. And there was greater reason for this than may be supposed, seeing that all along Essex was afraid to strike a decisive blow against the King, and seeing that the leader was but little prepared to carry the war to its final issues; it was no wonder that although the Parliamentary forces fared not badly, many feared we should at length be driven like sheep before the King's soldiers.

And now I have to tell that which leads me as it were to the marrow of my story, and towards which end all I have written seemed to be preparing for. It happened in the spring of 1643, three years after I had left home. We were at Reading at the time, I remember, which town we had recaptured, and I was sitting one night thinking of what I had promised three years before. The night was cloudy, and I was sadly brooding over all that had taken place. Through the day I had sought to make as merry as I could, for it was my twenty-fourth birthday, but try as I would I could not lift the weight from my heart.

And this was scarcely to be wondered at, for I had promised Rosiland when I left home to return on my

twenty-fourth birthday, and claim her for my wife. I reflected that she was now just of age, when my father's guardianship would cease, and when she, if she had not already done so, would be free to wed. I had thought of myself returning to Cornwall, amidst shouts of rejoicing, having gained both honour and riches at the hands of the King. Instead of this, however, I had become an outlaw, I had been disinherited, I was an outcast from my father's house, and I had lost the woman whom I still loved.

I say I was thinking of these things when young Nick Stamford came to me.

"Thank God, something hath happened at last," he said.

"Ay," I said unheedingly, for at that moment I had almost forgotten my surroundings.

"Ay," he went on, "and a good thing too. I am tired of this inactivity; but now I see gay doings. As for you, Falkland, you will see your native county again!"

"What!" I cried.

"Ay," he cried, "there is a great Royalist rising in Cornwall, and the King hath sent a part of his army from Oxford to help the Cornishmen."

"A rising in Cornwall!" I cried, my heart in my mouth.

"Ay, and a strong one, too. This time we are to give no quarter. It is to be a fight to the end."

"But who are the leaders of the Cornish?" I asked.

"The leader is Sir Bevil Greenvil," he replied, "and I hear that the pick of the county hath joined him. There is young Sir Nicholas Slanning, and young Sir John Trevanion, and Sir John Falkland—

ah! I had forgotten—Sir John Falkland; is he in any way related to you?"

"Sir John Falkland," I stammered. "What part of Cornwall does he hail from?"

"From Launceston, I'm told. He brings his sons and two hundred swords. What is the matter, man?"

For a moment I could not speak; in truth, it seemed that all power of speech was taken from me.

"When do we start?" I said at length.

"To-morrow. My father hath been placed in command, so I speak with certainty."

I had fought, so men said, bravely at Edgehill, at Brentford, and at Reading, even although the Parliamentary army had not been always victorious; but I had known little or nothing about those against whom I was fighting. But never had I fought against one of my own blood, and now, when on my birthday news came that I should have to go and meet my own father and brothers, I felt that death would be welcome.

"I will go to Lord Stamford," I thought; "I will tell him I cannot do this thing; I will urge that it is not Christian to will a man to fight against his own father."

With me to decide was to act, so I hurried to the presence of Lord Stamford with all speed.

Eagerly I told my story, while Lord Stamford listened impatiently. When I finished he opened a letter which lay before him.

"The situation is a hard one, Master Falkland," he said, "but I can do naught for you. Lord Essex hath given his orders, and I must obey. Moreover, you are specially mentioned. You are given command of a

small company, and must therefore go to Cornwall. I was on the point of sending for you when you came. This was Lord Essex's express command."

"But where is Lord Essex?" I cried.

"He left for London five hours ago."

"But——"

"There can be no 'buts.' I have already sent out orders that all must be ready to start by daybreak to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER XIV

HOW I SAW MY FATHER AT THE BATTLE OF STRATTON HILL

WHAT, I ask, could I do? On joining the Parliamentary Army I had taken a solemn oath that I would serve faithfully, that I would follow its fortunes at whatsoever hazard or danger, that I would obey all commands without question. To refuse would mean death. To desert would mean cowardice, disgrace, and the violation of my sacred oath. I had deserted the standard of the King; should I now think of deserting the cause which I had declared again and again I followed for conscience' sake? No, no, whatever happened I had given my word, I had pledged my faith, I had taken my oath. The cause was God's cause, for it meant the destruction of tyranny, and the sacred rights of the people.

But to go to my own native county, and fight against my own father and brothers! The thought almost made me mad. And yet, again I ask, what could I do? I had been promoted to a place of command, I had received special orders from Lord Essex, I had pledged myself to obedience, and therefore I must perforce obey whatever might come of it.

I was therefore ready when morning came, and I spoke no word of complaint as I took my place at the

head of my men, although my heart lay like lead, and my blood ran sluggish.

Of the journey from Reading to the Tamar there is no need that I should speak. Each day we did our appointed number of miles, and then rested when night came, without aught of importance happening. When we reached Crediton I asked Lord Stamford to tell me to what part of Cornwall he proposed journeying.

"To Launceston," he replied.

My looks, I doubt not, showed the dismay I felt, for the name of the town caused a pain in my heart, as though a sword passed through me.

"To Launceston," he repeated. "It is there the Cornishmen have gathered, and from there we must drive them."

"And then?" I asked.

"Every man of them must be either killed or taken prisoner," he said sternly. "If we are beaten, the Parliamentary cause is lost. The three Southern Counties be most sturdy for the King, and if we conquer them not, then not only be we lost, but our cause is lost."

"We have a difficult task," I replied.

"Ay, and why?"

"Because they will fight as families," I replied. "Every head of a house is like a father of a great family. The old feudal feeling obtains, and every man who takes up arms will not only fight with the thought of loyalty to the King, but they will fight for love of their masters. They will never yield."

"Then they must be killed," was the reply.

I doubt not I grew pale at his words, for he seemed to doubt my loyalty.

"Is thy love of thy family stronger than thy love for God and God's justice?" he replied.

"No," I said steadily, though I felt my lip quiver as I spoke.

"'He that loveth father, or mother, more than Me, is not worthy of Me,'" said Lord Stamford, quoting the words of Scripture.

"Will our soldiers fight for the love of Christ?" I asked.

"They will fight for Christ's cause," replied Lord Stamford grimly, and then he turned away.

The next day we marched towards Launceston, and as the shades of evening began to gather, and I saw the old town perched up on the hillside, I could scarce keep from sobbing like a boy. For while the others were marching towards a strange town, I was going towards my old home. I knew every lane, every meadow, and when at length we crossed the Tamar by Lifton, I looked around to see if I knew any of the boys and maidens who watched us with fearful and wondering eyes. I looked around, I say, and yet I was almost afraid to do this. I knew that they would believe as their masters believed, and hence they would look upon us as rebels fighting against God as well as the King.

"And this is my return home," I thought in my heart, as after having crossed the Tamar I knew that we were on the soil of Cornwall.

Yes, there was Launceston town in front of me. I saw the old church tower lifting its pinnacles into the sky, while behind stood Launceston Castle, grim and grey. There, too, was the road I had so often travelled on my way from the town to my home. There were the woods through which I had so often

roamed; ay, and beyond lay my old home. Even now I remember thanking God that I could not see it. If I had seen it, I know I should have turned coward on the spot, and run away like a whipped schoolboy.

Presently we drew within a mile of the town, and then Lord Stamford gave orders that we should camp for the night.

"The King's Army is there," he said, pointing towards Launceston Hill. "The night is nearly here now, and we can do naught, but at daybreak we must attack."

The words were scarcely passed his lips when a cry of dismay rang through the evening air.

"The Cornish, the Cornish, they be upon us!" was the cry, and even as they spoke an army sprang as it were from nowhere.

We were not prepared for battle, and they had come upon us suddenly. We made what defence we could, but this was little, so sudden was the attack. But in truth I knew little of what was taking place, so distraught was I.

"At 'em, boys!"

I heard the voice ring out above the din and confusion, and when I heard it I cried out like a wounded animal. It was my father's voice I heard, and I felt my blood turn into water. What need have I to describe that night further? We were driven northward like a flock of sheep. All through the night did my countrymen follow us, we scarce resisting, for although I judged there was no great number, yet they fought like men possessed with the spirit of battle, while we were weary after our long day's march, and had been thrown into confusion by the sudden attack.

Besides, the disaster of that night was largely due to me. There were times when, had we been fighting another enemy, I could have gathered my little company together, and kept them back; but when as again and again I heard my father's voice ringing out, I felt my strength leave me, and I had no more power than a child who had not yet learned to walk.

"That's it!" I heard my father say again and again, "for God and the King. Down with the rebels!" and then my countrymen would shout with hearty good will, and press onward.

I say had I been in another part of England I would have scorned to fly in this way. I would have bidden my men stand fast, and together we would have stemmed their onslaught, and perchance have driven them back. But how could I? The first blow I struck might fall upon the head of John or Bart, or—Great God, the very thought of it well-nigh drove me mad!—upon the head of my own father.

Towards early morning they had ceased to follow us, and then Lord Stamford gave orders that we were to camp at the foot of Stratton Hill, and to prepare for battle the next day.

I have no heart to describe what took place later. In truth I could not if I would, for I lived as it were in a dream, and only a few things stand out clearly before my mind's eye. This I do remember: when the sun arose, I saw Sir Bevil Greenvil's army not far away, and although I had become accustomed to the thought that I should have to fight my own kinsmen, yet could I not grasp all the issues fairly. Nevertheless, I did not in all that followed yield one inch to any man. A great, grim despair gat hold of me, and like one borne onward by powers over which he hath

no control, I, as many men have since testified, fought like a man who had naught to hope for but death, but who never yielded as much as the width of a sword-blade.

For three days did we harry them; moreover, by a strategy which I myself suggested, we placed a company of men between Sir Bevil Greenvil's army and Launceston town, so that no provisions could be brought to them. I know not how I had the heart to do this, yet I did it, my heart aching all the time, and my blood running cold through my veins. Moreover, the strategy was a good one. Sir Bevil could not spare men to fight the little company, for by so doing he would weaken his fast thinning forces and lay himself at our mercy.

Thus it came about that at the end of three days the Cornish soldiers were well-nigh destitute of food. Some say that they were reduced to one solitary biscuit to a man. Yet did they not shrink, while their shouts rose joyously in the air, as though they were sporting at a village feast. Braver men did no army ever fight against. We were their superiors in numbers, and yet did they hold us at bay; nay, more, as those who have told the story of the time have made known, they became our conquerors. Unable to get victuals from Launceston, they determined to attack our main army, seize our provisions, and drive us before them.

Many brave deeds were done during those terrible years, many a man fought against impossible odds, and then died with a shout, like the shout of victory, on his lips; yet never were braver deeds done than by those Cornishmen, who scaled Stratton Hill, and drove Stamford's army back towards Exeter. More-

over, and this I am proud to say, while many of King Charles's men were base and sordid, and fought for unworthy motives, those Cornishmen fought because they believed it was the will of God that Charles should be King, even as he desired to be King, ruling as he would, and no one daring to ask him questions, and because they loved and had perfect trust in such men as Sir Bevil Greenvil and my father, who led them on to battle.

Even now my heart burns as I think of the way they scaled the steep rise of Stratton Hill. Famished and enfeebled as they were, having scarce a handful of powder in their whole force, they dashed onward with stern resolution in their eyes, and a shout of victory upon their lips. They had only their swords, but they never faltered. Every blow they struck seemed to be the blow of a giant, and Stamford's men fell before them like wheat falls before the swish of a harvester's scythe. Never did we dream of such a calamity, for Stamford lost not only two thousand men, but his ordnance and baggage-train.

Towards the evening of the day I received a command from Lord Stamford to take my company and meet a detachment of Sir Bevil's men, who evidently designed to attack the left wing of our army.

"If you do not keep them back the day is lost," cried Stamford.

"There is scarce a handful of men fit," I answered; yet did I obey him without hesitation, for the heat of the battle was upon me, and I forgot everything save that the band who crept up the eastern slope of the hill must be driven back.

We rushed down upon them with a shout; but

although we had the advantage of ground, yet did they hold their own bravely, scarcely yielding an inch. The look of famished wolves was in their eyes, yet did they not show a sign of weakness. But this did not last long; my men were better fed, better armed than they, and so little by little we drove them towards a little plantation at the foot of the hill. When this was accomplished I thought my work was done; but scarcely had the hope come into my heart when a band of ten men came up, headed by one the very sight of whom made me forget everything save my love for Rosiland and my desire for revenge.

"Ah! you traitor and coward," I cried, "I had hoped to meet you."

At this Ralph Greenvil, for it was he, laughed, like one in great good humour. But I saw by the way in which his lips were drawn back from his teeth that there was no mirth in his heart. Nay, his laugh was, after all, only like the snarl of a dog; and even then I was reminded of a low-bred cur, who was on the point of springing upon his prey.

"Fight, you lying thief!" I cried again, for I thought he sought to turn away.

"Ah! my young heart-breaker, my boaster of lady's love-tokens, it is you, is it?"

I rushed upon him; I could not help it, and in my rage I spat upon his face.

"Fight, you liar!" I cried out again in my frenzy.

"Ay, I will fight soon enough for you," he replied; "but let the duel be arranged decently. Your men will see that you have fair play, while mine will take care that you play no traitor's tricks on me. Afterwards I will tell the fair Rosiland all about it."

On this he half drew his sword, and then he hesitated like one in doubt.

"Ought a soldier of the King to fight a traitor and a rebel as if he were a gentleman?" he said, with a savage leer at me. "I trow not."

"Then are you a coward," I cried, "a coward as well as a liar and a thief."

"Strike him down!" he said, turning to his followers.

But at this there was hesitation on the part of the Cornishmen, for behind me stood my soldiers with their muskets loaded. Besides, some of his followers knew me; indeed, two of them, young Nick Trounsen and George Trelaske, had been to school with me under Master Piper.

"He offers fair, Greenvil," said Nick Trounsen. "Fight him, man, if you would not be called a coward by more than him."

This he said like one who had forgotten the great battle which was being fought on the hillside above, and only remembered a desire to see me have my quarrel out with one who had been speaking evil of me.

He turned angrily on Trounsen, and then, before I realised what he was doing, he rushed upon me. It was only by an accident that my life was spared, for the blow he gave meant death. As it happened, however, he caught his foot in a twig, and thus I was able to save myself. After this we fought on equal terms.

I still maintain that Ralph Greenvil was a coward, for how can a liar and a thief be anything else? Yet did he fight with grim desperation, and so much skill that for a time I was sore put to it. Presently,

however, I thought I was gaining advantage over him, for his guard grew weaker, and he seemed to turn to his followers as if for help. This availed me little, as will be speedily seen, for when I thought my victory over him assured, I heard a voice which made my sinews as soft as those of a young maid.

"Roderick, down with your sword—down, I say!"

It was my father's voice, and as though I had no will but to obey him, I felt my sword-point strike a stone near my foot.

"Cease fighting, and yield," he continued. "Oh God, that ever I should have to speak such words."

I turned, and saw him all covered with blood, his face gashed from ear to chin, and his left arm hanging helplessly by his side.

"Give up your sword," he continued, in his old tone of command, and yet did his voice seem but a gasp of agony.

He had evidently but just arrived, and I saw that he was so wounded that it was only by the power of his own will that he kept himself from falling.

I say the sight of him unnerved me, and I became as a child again. For the moment I had forgotten that the country was at war, and I was fighting on the side of liberty and truth; rather I felt I was only a disobedient boy, whose naughtiness my father had discovered. Had it been the King who had commanded me, I should have still fought on; but at my father's voice, and in his presence, I was helpless.

Of what followed after that I remembered but little. I had a sort of hazy idea that I was being taken by the Cornishmen, while my soldiers retreated, fighting as they went; but how the battle went I knew not. And this was no wonder, for I saw my

'RODERICK, DOWN WITH YOUR SWORD—DOWN, I SAY!'"

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father stagger and fall, and even as he fell he gazed towards me as if in agony.

"The curse of God is upon us," I heard him say. "My son, my youngest son, hath lifted his hand against the King. Oh, have no pity—hold him safe—imprison him, he is no son of mine. I cast him off for ever."

Then his eyes closed, and his face became pale as death, save where the blood oozed from the gash in his cheek.

I remember trying to rush to him and beseech his forgiveness, but I was kept back by strong hands.

"Let me go to him; he is dying," I cried, for I had forgotten my fight with Ralph Greenvil—forgotten everything save the pale, ghastly face of my father. But I was not allowed to go near him. Instead, I felt myself dragged away southward, but whither I knew not.

Even now the memory of that day comes back to me like a black nightmare. Mile after mile I trudged on, almost oblivious to what was around me, yet realising that I was a prisoner, and accompanied by several men, most of whom seemed to be wounded.

"Where is my father? How fareth he? Is he dead?" I remember asking again and again, but no man answered me, save by a stern bidding to hold my peace.

I think I must have been mad for some hours, for I do not remember entering Launceston town at all, and yet do I clearly remember waking presently to full consciousness, and seeing grim black walls all around me.

"I am in prison," I said to myself, "but where?"

All around was a great silence, neither could I hear

the sound of footsteps anywhere. Then, by-and-by, a kind of terror gat hold of me, for I heard the striking of a church clock. When the last sound died away I knew where I was. I knew the chime of that bell better than I knew the sound of my own voice. I had heard it from earliest childhood. Its echoes had come to me when I lay in my bed as a boy at home. It was the clock of Launceston Church, while I was a prisoner in Launceston Castle. I say this came to me as a great terror, for I had always been taught to regard imprisonment in Launceston Castle as the one great disgrace of life. At this time it was regarded as a place of punishment for the offals of the country, and as such I dreaded it. Besides, it was but a little distance from my home, so that the news would soon reach my mother and Rosiland that I was there imprisoned for my naughtiness.

After a little time the door opened, and a man brought me food. I knew him at once. He was the son of one of the small farmers who rented a few acres of land from my father.

"William Dawe," I said.

"Oh, Maaster Roderick, how could 'ee? How could 'ee?" he said, like one in sorrow.

"I am in Launceston Castle, William?" I said.

"Iss, and you'll be hanged, Maaster Roderick."

"Who says so?"

"Sir Hugh Piper."

My heart sank at this, for Sir Hugh Piper, who was Constable of the Castle, was the brother of Master Piper, my old schoolmaster.

"My father, William—know you aught of him?"

"He's took home. He've tould Sir Hugh to have no mercy on 'ee. How could 'ee, Maaster?"

At this he left me, and although he brought me food regularly during the next two days, not one word would he speak, either of condemnation or comfort.

On the third day, however, he spoke again.

"Your end es near," he said, in a fearful whisper.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"Sir Hugh es comin' to see 'ee dreckly." And then he left me again.

CHAPTER XV

HOW ROSILAND AND I MET AFTER MORE THAN THREE YEARS

I HAD not long to wait. Before a man could well count twenty after William Dawe had left me, I heard voices, and presently Sir Hugh Piper entered. I had known him from childhood, and he had been a constant visitor at my father's house.

For some seconds he looked at me in silence, and I saw by the look in his eyes that he regarded me not only with anger, but with sorrow.

"Young Roderick," he said presently.

"Yes, Sir Hugh," I answered, for I determined that I would show a brave face, and let both him and others know that I was not ashamed of what I had done. And here let me say again that in spite of all that had happened I felt no shame. Rebel as I was regarded, I still had the feeling that, believing as I did, I could not, as a man of conscience, do other.

"This is a sad business," he sighed presently.

"Ay, it is," I made answer. "When a nation hath to tell a king his duty, and to fight for the liberties which he should uphold, it is a sad business for the King."

"But for a subject to lift up his hand against his King!" urged Sir Hugh.

"No man desires to harm the King," I replied.

"Yet the rebels have lifted up their hands against him."

"No," I replied, "they be not rebels. They be as much men of honour as you, Sir Hugh. And they only fight for what is just."

"Ay," he said, like one meditating, "they have fought well, although their cause is lost now."

"Lost?" I queried.

"Ay, the Cornishmen have driven the Parliamentarians back, and now there are not a round dozen in both Devon and Cornwall but who be prisoners like thee, or faithful to King Charles. In truth, I hear that all the followers of Essex be ready to lay down their arms. Hampden is dead, and many others of note. Ay, Roderick, but this is a sad business!"

"The cause is not lost yet," I cried, but my heart sunk like lead.

"Ay, it is, and oh, Roderick, I be grieved to see you here. I hear that you did fight well—ay, fight like a young tiger; but you were on the wrong side. You must have felt it yourself, for when you had young Ralph Greenvil at your mercy, your arm became but as dough at the sound of your father's voice."

"That was not because I did not believe in the cause," I replied as bravely as I could, although I found myself looking on the ground, rather than at Sir Hugh Piper's face; "but I saw my father wounded, and so, when he commanded me to—— But how is my father, Sir Hugh?"

"Sorely wounded—and many say by thy hand. He is at thy old home, Roderick, the home which is thine no longer."

"But he will live—my father?" I cried.

"Live? Sir John Falkland die? Ay, he will live, Roderick; he gains strength every day, and he will soon be back with the King's soldiers. But ah, he is sorely angry with his youngest son. You will have no mercy, Roderick."

"I expect none," I replied.

"What do you expect?" he asked.

At this I was silent, for I hardly dared to put my thoughts into words.

"Your father urges that no consideration shall be given to you because of him. He says you are no longer a son of his, thus it is a foregone conclusion that you will be gibbeted."

At this a desperate desire to escape came into my heart, and I doubt not Sir Hugh saw it in my eyes.

"No, no, Roderick, none of that," he cried; "as you have made your bed, so you must lie."

"Let me see my father," I cried; "let me tell him all the truth."

"He will have naught to do with thee, Roderick; he will not even allow thy name to be mentioned in his hearing."

"Then my mother," I cried; "let me see her. She will know, she will understand."

At that Sir Hugh looked at me in a quizzical way.

"As to that I will see," he said presently; "but there must be no attempts at escape, Master Roderick, mind that."

After this he was silent a few moments, while I tried to read the look in his face.

"Should visitors come, you will be well-behaved and quiet?" he went on at length.

At this I nodded eagerly, for my heart began to beat with hope again.

"But how canst thou escape?" he continued, as if talking to himself. "These walls be three feet thick, while the outer walls be high. It is true a free man might climb the one by the road leading to Lewannick, but sentinels be everywhere. Besides, in Cornwall every man would be thy enemy. Horseless and moneyless as thou art, what chance would there be? Oh, I see no hope for thee, Roderick, none at all."

At this he went away, while I pondered over what he had said, and wondered whether I were near my death, even as he had hinted.

Late that night the door of my prison opened as if by an unseen hand, and I saw the form of a woman. Her face was hidden by the cloak she wore, but I saw by the light of the lantern she carried that her form was erect and stately.

"Mother!" I said eagerly, yet did I not rush towards her, for in spite of my hopes something held me back.

"No, it is not your mother," said a voice which made every nerve of my body tingle. "Your mother could not come. Your father forbade her."

"Rosiland!" I cried.

For answer she threw back the hood which hid her face, and I saw that I had spoken truly. But it was not the Rosiland I had seen last. Then her eyes were as soft as velvet, then her lips smiled on me, then I felt that she loved me. Now I saw that no kindness was in her heart. Her eyes were as cold and as hard as steel; her face told me of scorn and anger.

"I came because of your mother," she said slowly, and her voice was not like Rosiland's voice at all; "I would have given much to have disobeyed, for to breathe the same air as you breathe is disgrace; yet it was her will, and I have come."

"Thank you, Rosiland," I said. "Perchance——"

"I forbid you to call me by my name," she went on in the same cold, hard voice, "and I would not have come had there been another who could have been sent. But there was not. Your brothers, even had they been free to come hither, would have scorned to hold converse with you; but they are not free. They are fighting for their King, they are helping to drive the rebels before them. Your father is lying ill of his wounds, and he hath forbidden your mother to have speech with you. At first I also refused to come, but because she loves you in spite of your disgrace, and because she longed for a message to be taken to you, I at length yielded to her entreaties."

At this she paused a moment, and then went on in the same cold, measured tones: "I will therefore tell you what she told me, and I will give you what she gave me, and then I will leave you to your thoughts."

Not only her words, but the way she spoke angered me much. I could see that she loathed being in my presence, as though I were some pestilence. There was scorn in every word she spoke; there was contempt for me in the way she kept as far away from me as the walls of my prison would allow. Had I been some species of vermin she could not regard me with more hatred; had I been some leprous vagabond she could not have drawn her garments more closely round her, as though she feared contamination.

"You will not at least leave me until I have been

told why you speak to me in that fashion," I said quietly, for I felt that I could meet scorn with scorn as well as she.

"There is surely no need to tell you," she replied, "and it is very painful to bandy words with such as you. Even you must feel that. And yet I do not know. One who has sunk so low as to fight against his own father and brothers, to say nothing of fighting against the King, may not be able to understand. One who is so lost to honour as to give what should be regarded as sacred to a low-born woman, and then boast of it afterwards, cannot perhaps understand how I suffer in obeying your mother's commands."

Even as she spoke I loved her more than ever. Although her every word was like a poisoned knife piercing my heart, I longed to hold her to me, and tell her that for her I would sacrifice everything she should ask for.

It was now more than three years since I had beheld her, and as my eyes became accustomed to the light of the candle she carried I was able to see her as plainly as on the spring evening when we sat together in the woods near my father's house. I saw, too, that she was grown from a beautiful girl to a more beautiful woman. She was more tall, more stately than then. Her figure was rounded to a great perfection; there was a strength and a dignity in her presence which I had never noticed in the old days.

For a time I could not answer her. I thought of the dreams I had had of my home-coming. I remembered how I had told myself that I would come home laden with fortune and honours, and that I would claim her as my wife amidst gladsome acclamations.

Instead, I was there as a rebel prisoner, as one who had forsaken his father's cause, had fought against his King, and had been guilty of fighting on the side of those who had shed his father's blood. She whom I had fondly hoped would greet me with a glad welcome loathed my presence, and was angry because she had to speak to me.

All this I felt, and yet I was angry with her. What was her love, I reflected, if she had listened to the first liar that came along? What was her fidelity if she could even pay the slightest heed to such as Ralph Greenvil?

"Perhaps you may be right," I answered, in tones as cold and as defiant as her own, "and perhaps that is why I cannot understand how a maid of gentle birth can condemn unheard. Perhaps that is why I grow angry that she should pay heed to a swashbuckler who is without either conscience or honour. For I had thought of you as possessing a noble heart, signorina; I had dreamt of you as trusting your old playmate more than you would trust the words of one who flaunts his belief that every woman's love can be bought."

"I did not condemn you without proof," she said hastily. "That—that which I gave you was brought back to me. Bought from——"

"Who told you this?" I interrupted. "Was it not Ralph Greenvil?"

"No matter who it was," she replied. "Enough that I possess it now, and that I shall never part with it again."

"It doth matter who it was," I cried, "for I swear to you by the Saviour who died for us that the story which hath been told you is a lie. I never gave your

—your parting gift to any one; I never showed it. I guarded it jealously."

"Then how came it in the hands of that hot gospeller's daughter?" she asked scornfully.

"It was never in her hands," I replied, "never! It was stolen from me by the hands of a traitor and a coward."

At this she laughed scornfully.

"Yes," I went on, "you refuse to believe one who never told you a lie. You accept the words of a wandering adventurer rather than mine."

"How can I refuse to believe my own senses? How can I believe in the words of a man who has defiled his father's honour?"

"I never have," I replied.

"Is it not defiling his honour to betray the cause to which he hath given his heart?" she cried, an angry light coming into her eyes, and a flush rising to her cheeks. "You knew that the cause of the King was dearer than all others, you knew that he trained you to believe in that cause. Moreover, you promised him never to fail your King; ay, and you promised me also. You professed to care for me, and I—I believed you. I told you that if ever you proved faithless to the King's cause never to expect to see me again; yet within a year you refused to obey your King's command. How then can you expect me to believe in you?"

"Because," and now I had forgotten everything save my desire to defend my conduct before this maid, "because I discovered that the King's cause was the cause of oppression and tyranny and lies," I cried. "Because Charles broke every kingly law, because he proved false to his promises, because he

upheld a system which would bring us back to Mary's days. Because he asked even me to be an emissary to the Pope of Rome, and to urge him to send Italian soldiers to fight against my own countrymen. Because he cared nothing for his subjects, but cared everything for his own power. I went to London as the servant of Strafford, yet though I admired his strength and sagacity, I found him to be a tyrant. Ay, he, an Englishman, aided and abetted Laud and the King in the scheme for bringing the Pope's soldiers. Ay, if he could have done it, he would have obtained the help of Spain, the eternal enemy of England, in order to have his will. Oh, I know you are half Italian and a Catholic, but even you could never consent to seeking the Pope's aid to destroy the liberties of Englishmen. Moreover, if they had their way, I mean Charles and Laud and Strafford, we should be a nation of slaves."

"You have learnt your speech well, Master Rebel," she said with much scorn.

"I have learnt it unwillingly," I replied. "Think you it cost me nothing to take the course I did? Do you think I did not realise it meant my father's curse, and the loss of your love?"

"Then why did you take it?"

"Because I could do no other. Because my mother taught me that there was higher law than that of kings!"

"And that, Master Rebel?"

"The law of conscience, the law of God," I replied.

"And do you mean to say"—and there was angry incredulity in her voice—"that you believed you were obeying God in doing this?"

"Else had I not done it. Oh, signorina, do you

think it cost me nothing? Ay, but it did—yet there be things which a man must do in spite of himself."

"Reports must lie terribly," she said, "since I have heard that the soldiers of Essex be a drunken, roystering crew. If they fight for conscience, then God help us all! As for the liberty that you boast of, is the liberty offered by these Presbyterians greater than the liberty which Laud offered?"

At this she pained me sorely, for I knew her words were true; yet was I not slow in answering.

"As to that, mistress," I said, "the soldiers of Parliament be far more sober and far better behaved than those of the King. Moreover, we be not fighting for Presbyterianism, but rather for the restoration of the Church to purity."

"The Independents hate the Episcopacy," she cried.

"Nay, that is not true," I made answer; "yet they do demand, and rightly demand as I think, that every man shall have the right to pray as he lists, and the right to read the Bible for himself."

"And you would fight for such a cause?"

"Ay, that would I, and that will I if ever I am a free man again."

"Even against your own father and brothers," she cried.

"That taunt is unworthy of you, mistress," I replied, "for a man who believes in God, and God's truth, must fight for it."

At this she was silent, and I thought I saw a look of doubt in her eyes. Whereupon I continued eagerly:

"And, Mistress Rosiland, pray do not judge hastily in relation to—that other matter. Even although you scorn me, yet do I still love you, and never have I once been untrue to that love."

Upon this I told her rapidly, yet with many stammering words, how I had lost the sachet, and of the events which followed. At this, however, her eyes grew hard again; neither would she make answer, either good or bad, whereupon my heart grew as heavy as lead, for now I felt sure that her love for me had gone, and that she would never think of me kindly again.

"I have already stayed too long with you," she said coldly; "yet have I delivered neither your mother's words nor her letter."

"What said my mother?" I asked.

At this she looked on the ground, like one embarrassed.

"I like not speaking her words," she said presently, "because she will seem thereby to be encouraging you in your naughtiness. Yet must I speak them, even as she spake them to me. 'Tell Roderick,' she said, 'that I love him always, and that he must never fear aught if he is sure he is following the call of God. Tell him, also, never to be afraid to follow the light, whithersoever it may lead.'"

At this the tears came into my eyes, and I had much ado in keeping from sobbing outright. Yet, knowing Rosiland's scornful eyes were upon me, I mastered myself, and looked at her steadily.

"And her letter?" I said; "where is that?"

Without a word she handed me a carefully folded piece of paper, which I put away under my doublet to read when no prying eyes should be upon me.

"I will go now," she said coldly. "May God lead you to repentance."

"Tell my mother that I am trying to be worthy of her love and her trust," I said; "and tell her also

that the sun never sets nor rises but I pray that God will bless her. Tell her I love her with all my heart, and that whatever happens I shall be glad that I followed her counsel."

"I will try and remember," she said coldly; then she turned to go.

At this all my strength seemed to ebb away, and I cried out—

"Oh, Rosiland, go not from me like that!"

"God give you repentance," was her reply.

"But, Rosiland, I could not do otherwise. Will you not pray that I be delivered from this place?"

"I will pray that you may repent," she answered, still in the same tone.

"But speak one word of kindness," I cried; "it is dark and lonely here,—and—and—Rosiland, will you give me back the sachet?"

At this she turned upon me, her eyes gleaming with anger.

"My sachet—to you!" she said.

"Ay," I urged eagerly. "I swear again to you that what you have heard are lies, foul lies; and that I lost it even as I told you."

At this she became mocking again, even as she was soon after she came to me.

"To whom would you give it next?" she asked.

"To no one," I replied. "I would guard it with my life. Besides, I could not give it away, even if I would—Sir Hugh Piper hath told me that——" But I did not finish the sentence, fearing the pain it would give my mother when she came to know.

"If you would promise to be faithful to the King, even now you might find mercy," she said.

"No, I could not promise that," I replied.

"Not for the sachet?" And she turned swiftly upon me in a way I could not understand.

"You do not mean that?" I cried.

"Answer me."

"No, I could not promise that," I replied.

At this she laughed a low mocking laugh.

"I thought you might be capable even of that," she said. "Not that I ever thought of giving it to you. If ever I give such a token again, it shall be to some one I trust entirely—and whom—I—I love. As for you, I would as soon give it to one of your father's grooms as to you."

"Perhaps you have already given it to some one else," I said, stung by her words; "perhaps to the swashbuckler who stole it from me."

"Even he is loyal to his King," she replied; whereupon she left me without another word.

All through the night I sat thinking of what she had said, and waiting for the light to come, whereby I could read my mother's letter.

For a time I wondered how she had gained admission, but I remembered Sir Hugh Piper's words, and came to the conclusion that he had arranged it out of love to my father.

Presently, when the sun arose, I was able to read what my mother had written. It was only a few words, but enough to set me wondering greatly. This was what I read:—

"*I write this to tell you that I love you and trust you fully. If the door of your prison is left unbolted to-morrow night at midnight, go out quietly—the passage leads to the castle grounds. When there, if you see a gleam of light, follow it. Afterwards, no matter what happens, still follow the gleam.*"

CHAPTER XVI

HOW I WENT BACK TO MY OLD HOME

Now, as may be imagined, the visit of Rosiland and my mother's letter filled my mind throughout the whole of the day. Everything was so unlooked for, so unexpected. For although I had often wondered whether, seeing I was so near my old home, I should ever have the chance of speaking to the maid I so much loved, I did not dare to believe that such an event could happen. And even now it had come to pass, her visit had brought me more sorrow than joy. True, it rejoiced me much to see her again, and even although she had met me with a scornful and an angry look in her eyes, the sight of her face did much to ease my aching heart. But when I remembered the dreams I had had of my home-coming, and of what had really taken place, I was well-nigh ready to give way to despair. For I saw that she had come to me against her will, and that even although I could convince her that I had never given away her sachet, she could never forgive me for forsaking the cause in which she believed. In truth, so angry was she because of this that she could think no good of me whatsoever. So that, think of the matter how I would, I could see no ray of hope anywhere. Rosiland was lost to me, and lost for ever. A great

gulf was fixed between us that neither of us could bridge across. The cause which had become holy to me was unholy to her. I had been slowly led to believe that every man should have liberty in religion, even as in other matters; while she believed that such liberty was sacrilege and blasphemy. She believed that the King should be obeyed because he was King, no matter what he might do; while I had become convinced that Charles stood for tyranny and slavery, and must be resisted. She believed in the cause of Charles also because he upheld Laud and religious authority, and because it was believed that the Archbishop was doing his best to bring back Popery; while I, who had set out to do this, had been fighting against both the King and Laud.

Therefore she believed all the evil that had been spoken against me, especially as the sachet she had given me as a love token had been brought back to her with many lying tales.

When I remembered this, even the suggestion of liberty made in my mother's letter brought me but little joy, although I meant to make the most of it. Still, in spite of everything, it brought light in my dark sky. My mother still loved me, my mother still believed in me, and therefore I was not altogether in despair. I could not help feeling, moreover, that she sympathised with me in what I had done, else why had she written me in such a way? why had she not offered me one reproach, even although my father lay ill with wounds said to be inflicted by my hands?

When night came I grew much excited, for while at first liberty did not seem so dear to me, as midnight drew on I felt that I would dare everything for it.

I wondered much what her words meant, and whether she had been able to persuade Sir Hugh Piper to relax the diligence of the gaolers; but of this I knew nothing.

At sunset William Dawe brought me my supper as usual; but although I questioned him closely, not one word would he speak to me. It is true I said nothing concerning any plan of escape, but I did ask him how many gaolers were in the prison, what time they went to bed, and other such questions; but concerning these things he would say nothing.

Nevertheless, when he had gone, and I knew I should have no other visit from my keepers that night, I saw a piece of iron lying on the ground, which, on examining, I found to be a kind of key. This I carefully preserved, and then waited with many misgivings until the clock of Launceston church should strike twelve.

I had tried the door with my key when the clock struck eleven, but it remained firmly closed. This, as may be imagined, caused me to have many misgivings; nevertheless, when the last sound of the clock after striking twelve died away, I again put it in the keyhole. This I did with a fast-beating heart, and I gave a cry of dismay when the door still remained fast closed.

It was not quite dark in my prison, for the moon was well-nigh at its full, and its light played pleasantly through the little window. This window was carefully barred, and was so small that no man could crawl through it. Nevertheless, it advantaged me much, for the rays of the moon shot through it, and fell straight upon the door. By this means my attention was drawn to the fact that there was a space

of well-nigh half an inch between the door and the jamb-post. I therefore seized my key again, and having inserted it in this crevice, I gave a wrench which caused the door to open.

"This hath been arranged for me," I thought joyfully; and then I silently crept out into the passage. I turned to the left; but here was a thick iron-studded door, so I turned to the right and crept along a passage for well-nigh a dozen yards, when I heard the sound of voices.

"Well, it's my watch now, William Dawe," I heard a voice say.

"Ay," replied William Dawe, "but you have always the best time. There's naught to do at night. Every prisoner is asleep."

"Ay, who knows. Anyhow, I shall keep well awake."

"Tut, man, don't be a fool. Go into your little cuddy, and smoke your pipe."

"Nay, but it is lonely and dark there. I would rather stay out here in the moonlight."

"Well, I don't feel like bed yet, although my time is up. I will go with you and sit for a few minutes. I have also a quart of good ale that we can drink together. What think you of that, Ned Juliff?"

"Ale! Come, William, come! But stay, you have not locked the door of the passage here."

"Look," said William, and he shut the door. "What can be locked better than that? Here are all the keys."

I heard the jangling of iron, and then as the two men walked away together my heart sunk like lead. However, I waited quietly for a few minutes, and then when all was quiet I tried the door.

It yielded without a pound of pressure. "Ah, William Dawe," I thought, "you are my friend," and then I crept outside the door, and closed it silently, keeping well in the shadow of the old castle all the time.

The fresh air gave me not only strength, but confidence. Besides, I felt I had a friend near me, who had evidently been planning for my escape.

I remained there quietly for some time, watching intently for some gleam of light, but I could see nothing. Moreover, a great bank of clouds had arisen and covered the moon, so that, while it was not pitch dark, it was difficult to see which way to turn. I therefore determined to wait, in order to obey the instructions in my mother's letter; and this was not without danger, as you will see.

For, some minutes having passed away, and no light having appeared in any quarter, I began to grow impatient, and was just determining to make my way to that part of the castle wall which was close by the Lewannick road, and much lower than any other part, when I heard voices again.

"You must go now, William," I heard Ned Juliff say. "You know the rules. Two keepers must not be seen together talking after the clock strikes twelve at night. Therefore I must e'en lock you out."

At this William Dawe spoke no word, and I heard the gate of the main entrance open. Then my heart leaped bravely, because in the very part of the wall which I had thought of trying to climb I saw what seemed to me a gleam of light. I therefore crept towards it as silently and yet as swiftly as I could, looking eagerly around all the time, and listening for some guiding sound. When I reached the wall no

light was to be seen, and I saw to my dismay that nothing but a cat could climb the great barrier between myself and liberty. It was true it was ivy-grown, but it was more than twelve feet high. I saw, however, that my case was not quite hopeless, for not far from the wall was a great tree, the branches of which spread over it and on to the other side.

Without hesitating a second, therefore, I jumped up, and caught one of the boughs which hung just above my head; but it must have been well-nigh rotten, for no sooner did my weight come upon it than it snapped off with a sound not unlike a pistol-shot.

"Good God! what's that?" I heard Ned Juliff say, and then I heard him come towards me.

One thinks quickly at such a time—ay, and acts quickly, too, if fright doth not scatter his wits. So I looked eagerly around me, and saw the Witch's Tower close by. Now this Witch's Tower was supposed to be haunted by the spirit of a witch named Jezebel Grigg, who had once been confined and burned there. I had it in my mind, therefore, to play on Ned Juliff's fears by assuming the part of the witch's ghost, but quickly gave up the thought. If I were successful in working upon his fears he would cry out for help, which, if it were forthcoming, would make my escape more difficult. This strategy, therefore, would be dangerous; thus my only plan would be to pounce upon him suddenly, and silence him before help could come. I therefore crept slowly backwards towards the trunk of the tree, keeping my eyes on Ned, who came slowly towards me.

"What es et, I wonder?" I heard him mumbling

to himself. "Ted'n ou'll Jezebel's ghost, es et, I wonder?"

At this he stopped like one in doubt. "Ef tes she I be'ant goin' to stay 'ere; but then it mayn't be she. An' ef anything wos to 'appen, an' I wos to run away, people 'ud laugh at me; iss, an' they would make it hard for me. Beside, the sound ded'n seem to come from the Witch's Tower, but from thickey tree."

He seemed to muster up his courage at this, and started to walk towards me again.

"Ted'n no witch," I heard him say, when he had gone a few steps farther. "She do never make a sound like a musket-shot, but do howl like a dog in the moonlight." And then he came towards me again, looking eagerly around all the time, yet not seeing me, because I was well within the black shadow of the tree.

"I'll show 'em I'm not 'fraid of witches, nor ghosteses," he said, and then I saw that he was coming in a direct line for me.

There was no help for it. If it came to a scuffle between us he would perhaps prove my match, for he was a strong, heavily built man. I knew that if I was to rid myself of him it must be done suddenly. So without a sound of warning I hardened the muscles of my right arm, and then, aiming a blow at his right jaw, I struck him a heavy blow. All my strength went into the blow—a strength that was intensified by my sense of danger and my longing for liberty. He fell like a log of wood, stunned and silent.

Again I caught hold of a branch of the tree, and drawing myself up, I was able to travel along the branch by means of my hands until I came to the

wall. A minute later I had dropped on the other side, a free man. Everything had proved so easy that I could hardly believe in my own good fortune; nevertheless, I looked eagerly around me for the gleam of light mentioned in my mother's letter. First I turned to the right, where the road led to St. Thomas' Church beyond Launceston town, but all was dark there; then I gazed towards the Lewannick road, but still nothing appeared.

"There must be some mistake somewhere," I thought, "for my mother would never hold out a false hope."

Just then I heard Juliff moaning on the other side of the wall; so, knowing that time was precious, I was on the point of running down the bank and then taking the Lewannick road, when I saw a twinkling light in a field some distance away.

I hesitated not an instant, and a few moments later I was hurrying across the meadows which lie outside Launceston town towards the faint light I had seen.

"It is like a Jack o' th' lantern," I remember saying to myself. "Who carries it, I wonder? Can it be my mother? No, that cannot be. My father would wonder at her absence from his side at midnight, therefore it must be one of the trusted servants she hath sent."

As I descended into the valley I could see nothing, for the hill in front of me rose suddenly. Then I realised that I was taking a short cut towards my old home. Still wondering what it meant, I hurried up the hill, only to find that the light was gone. On reaching the top I again looked around me, and again for a time was I unable to see anything. But

this was not for long, for again I saw at some distance away a gleam of light. Moreover, it was not now just like a chance light among the fields, for it was waved to and fro, as though the one who carried it tried to attract attention.

By this time I was well-nigh half a mile from Launceston Castle, and thus was out of both sight and sound of that grim building. Moreover, although I listened intently, I could hear no following sounds. This gave me confidence, and also gave me time to think of my whereabouts.

I saw that I was on my own father's lands. I even recognised some of the fields I had roamed as a boy. At this my heart beat fast, and the tears rushed into my eyes; nevertheless, I did not give way to my feelings. I knew that I was still in danger of pursuers, so I again turned my face towards the distant light. My course was now easier. My way lay down a gentle slope, so I went at great speed, especially as a great desire came into my heart to know who carried the lantern I saw. But try as I might, I seemed to gain not one whit upon it. It was never a great distance away, and yet could I not get near enough to see who carried it, or whether it was a man or a woman.

"It must be some stranger," I thought at length, "who hath been told what to do without knowing the meaning of his act." Then I called to my mind a cry by which, when I was a boy at home, we used, when we played among the woods, to make known each other's whereabouts.

"Too whee—e-t—whoo—whoo, whoo!" I cried, making a sound which at times was like that of a screech-owl and at others like a wood-dove.

In a second the answer came back, as though it were an echo of my own voice.

"It is no stranger," I cried; "it must be one of our old servants."

Again I turned on, up hill and down dale, until I knew I was nearing my old home, but never once did I seem to gain on the light which went before me.

Presently I found myself in the lane which led to my home; ay, and on the very spot where, three years before, I had opened Rosiland's sachet and read the words she had written. But, arrived here, I could see the light nowhere. I climbed the hedge, and looked in every direction, but nothing could I see.

At this I wondered much what to do, for up to now I had not acted according to my own plans, but had obeyed implicitly the commands of my mother. Moreover, at this moment, realising how near I was to my old home, a great hunger came upon me to see it again.

"I will at least go on to the old gatekeeper's house," I thought. "I could not, now I am so near, go away without seeing it." So suiting the action to the thought, I hurried along the old lane, wondering at the stillness of everything, and calling to mind the scent of the wild flowers which I knew were growing around me, even although I could not see them.

I had not gone far when my heart beat fast again, for I saw a light shining from the window of the cottage where old Adam Truscott, the gatekeeper, had lived—not only ever since my father had owned the estates, but even before that time, when my grandfather reigned at my old home.

"Old Adam could never have carried the light," I said to myself: "he must be at least eighty; besides,

he was much troubled with rheumatics even when I lived at home. Still, the light in the window must mean something. Perhaps the one who carried the light is gone in there."

I therefore ran on quickly, and a minute later I saw a horse standing, saddled and bridled.

"Blossom," I said, "is that you?"

The animal gave a whinney as though it recognised my voice, and I felt sure that it was a mare I had broken to the saddle just before I went away, but which was then too young to stand long journeys. I minded me, moreover, that I had played with her as a filly, and that she used to follow me like a dog followed his master.

"Blossom, do you know me?" I said again; whereupon the animal rubbed her nose against my sleeve as though she knew me and welcomed me home.

Little as the thing was, it heartened me. At least a horse had welcomed me at my father's gateway. But I had other things to think of, especially as I thought I heard whispering voices in the cottage.

"Adam, is that you?"

I spoke not loudly, yet so distinctly that one could hear in the cottage.

The door opened, and old Adam appeared. He did not speak, but pointed to the horse.

"You mean that it is for me?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Haven't you a word of welcome, Adam?"

But the old man answered not.

"Will you not speak to me, Adam?" I said. "Don't you remember when you first taught me to ride?"

"Iss, God forgive me, but I do mind."

"Let me come into your cottage, Adam. There are so many things I want to ask."

"No, no."

"Why?"

"Sir John's orders. Even now I be breakin' orders. Sir John said—iss, months ago—ef a do come 'ome, set the dogs top un."

"What! Upon your old playmate, Adam? Upon the little Roderick whom you taught the tricks of wrestling?"

"What ded 'ee turn yer back 'pon the King for? Oa, oa, Maaster Roderick, my deear! You do mind what yer father said."

"How is my father to-day, Adam?"

"Better in body, I've heard—but he do zay, 'Laive un hang in Lanson Castle, 'ee's a traitor.'"

"And would you like me to hang, Adam? You would not, else why have you done what you have done?"

"'Cause I be a soft-hearted old boobah. Oa, Maaster Roderick, do 'ee repent! Do 'ee now, do 'ee! Ef you was to zay you'd fight for the King even now, I believe yer father wud forgive; he *ded* love 'ee so, and 'ee *was* so proud of 'ee."

But to this I made no answer, for what good could I do by telling him of my thoughts.

"Ca'ant 'ee, Maaster Roderick? Do 'ee now, do 'ee," he continued pleadingly.

"No, Adam, I can't do that."

"Then ride off—ride off right away. You'll be catched ef you don't."

"Where?"

"Oh, anywhere; but do'ant 'ee git catched again, Maaster Roderick."

By this time I felt my own man again, and with the return of my confidence came a great desire to know how my escape had been effected. But although I asked many questions, he would answer me nothing.

"My mother is well?" I asked presently.

"Iss. Her ladyship is well."

"I am going up to the house to see her."

"No, Maaster Roderick, no. If Sir John 'eerd your voice 'twould drive him maazed. Besides, if you wait you'll be catched."

"I'm going to see my mother," I said.

"But, but——" stammered the old man.

"I am going to see my mother," I interrupted grimly.

"But ef Sir Hugh Piper's men was to come up and see Blossom saddled?" he urged.

"Is this my Blossom—the colt I broke?"

"Iss—yer mawther ordered it."

When he said this I felt I must see her, whatever might be the consequences.

"Adam," I said, "take Blossom into the park, behind the trees, and wait for me until I come back."

The old man sighed as though he had no will but to obey. The habits of many years could not be broken. Sir John Falkland's son had commanded him, and he, in spite of other commands, must perforce do his bidding.

Rapidly I rushed up towards the house. Yes, there was a light in my father's room. That meant that some one was awake there. Were my father's wounds worse? My heart sunk like lead at the thought of it, for I remembered that at Stratton Hill I, his son, had fought against him. I felt I must know

everything, and, whatever else happened, I must see my mother.

I minded me again of the old cry we had used as children.

"To whee-e-e-t—to who-o-o—o-o!" I cried, not loud enough to wake a man out of his sleep, but so loud that those who were awake could hear.

A minute later a light appeared in the room next to my father's, and the window opened.

"Mother!"

"Roderick!"

That was all we said; but it was enough, for a few seconds later I heard the sound of footsteps. After that I heard bolts shoot back from the door, towards which I rushed with lightning speed; and in less time than it takes me to tell I held my dear mother in my arms.

At that moment I well-nigh forgot all that had taken place. I was home again, and my head rested on the bosom where, as a child, I used to sleep. I might be disinherited, and an outcast, but nothing could rob me of my mother's love. Others might doubt me, scorn me, but she remained faithful; and as I heard her say, "Roderick, my dear, dear boy," I did not even think of all those terrible doings in which I must take part, and of which I must soon write, if I tell my story faithfully.

CHAPTER XVII

I SPEAK WITH MY MOTHER AND RACHEL MARLOW

"MOTHER, you are not angry with me? I could do no other!"

"You've done nothing of which you are ashamed to tell me?"

"No, mother—that is, except during those days when I first went to London, and when I wasted my time with the loafers in taverns. But I was simply foolish, mother. Nothing more."

"You've never sullied your honour?"

"Never."

"Never forgotten that you were an English gentleman whom your mother taught to be a Christian?"

"No, mother."

"Then I am neither angry nor ashamed."

I looked at her steadily.

"Ask me no further questions, Roderick; but I am neither angry nor ashamed."

She had led me quietly into the house, and had lit a candle so that I could see her plainly.

"But my father?" I stammered.

"Your father sees not as you see," she replied; "but even he has seen what he will not as yet confess."

"My brothers?" I urged.

"Roderick, my son, it is terrible to think of you fighting on different sides. But they obey your father. Oh, it is all so terrible! But, Roderick, if you feel that you must still fight, go away to the north. Your brothers will not go beyond the river Severn, and if you go farther north there will be no fear of your meeting again. But, Roderick, which side will prevail?"

"The King will be overcome."

"But many say the Parliamentary cause is lost. The Cornishmen have driven the Parliamentary army right back beyond Exeter, and scattered them. It is also said that the Earl of Essex is afraid to fight a decisive battle."

"If those who oppose Charles consisted only of those who regard the matter as politics merely, then would Charles prevail," I made answer; "but there is a new commander whose name is becoming widely known. To him this war is a war for religious truth and liberty. He hath already gathered an army from the Eastern Counties, and I have heard that every man of them is a man of God."

"And who is this new leader?"

"His name is Oliver Cromwell."

"Tell me more," said my mother; and then she hearkened eagerly as though she heard some sound. "Wait a moment, Roderick," she continued. "I will e'en go to your father's side, and see if he is asleep. If he is I will come to you again."

A few seconds later she sat by my side again.

"Now tell me all, my son; your father sleeps soundly, and will not wake for an hour or more—at least, so I trust."

Whereupon I told her what I had gone through,

relating fully my interviews with Strafford and Laud, and King Charles, and Oliver Cromwell. When I had finished she said no word; but she kissed me, just as she had kissed me years ago each night before I went to bed.

"And you believe this Oliver Cromwell will prevail?" she said.

"I know but little as yet," I replied; "yet have I heard that his soldiers have never been defeated. It is said, too, that he gains in influence daily. And this is no wonder, for he will have no soldier under him but who believes he is fighting the cause of God. No swearing, no drinking is put up with, and each morning and night every man kneels in prayer; and so truly do they believe in God that some say they win their battles on their knees."

At this my mother looked thoughtful.

"And this is not the case with the King's soldiers?" she asked.

"Nor for that matter with the Parliamentarians," I replied. "But it is said that the great part of the King's soldiers be corrupt to the heart's core, and that they laugh with scorn at the psalm-singing followers of Cromwell. They take Prince Rupert as their example, who thinks more of the glory of fighting than the cause for which he fights. Thus, while a great part of the King's army be swashbucklers, each man in Cromwell's army believes he is fighting for God's truth."

"And that is the army which will prevail, my son," said my mother.

"Yes," I replied, "I believe it will prevail; for while the Cornish rising is because of belief in the King's cause, the rest care more for their own

aggrandisement than for justice. At least, so it is reported. For while there be many noble men who hoist the King's standard, the King's soldiers laugh at purity and goodness."

"But you say the Parliamentarians be but little better?"

"It is said that they be better than the King's soldiers; but before long I believe this man Cromwell will command the army, and if he does Charles will be overthrown."

At this my mother fell a-weeping.

"Oh, it is a terrible thing that a brother should fight against his brother," she said.

"Yet I could do no other, mother," I said.

To this she gave no answer, yet I saw her lips move as if in prayer.

"Mother, will you tell me by what means I was able to obtain my liberty?" I asked at length. "Who made my escape so easy, and who went before me with the light?"

But to this my mother made no reply, and I judged that she had prevailed on Sir Hugh Piper to help me.

"There," said my mother at length, "morning is dawning, you must go now. Your old playmate, Blossom, is waiting to take you whither you will."

I saw that her lips quivered as she said this, so I choked down the sob that rose in my own throat, for God knows I was desirous of saving her all the pain I could.

"Mother," I said, "Rosiland is of age now. Doth my father still will that she shall marry one of my brothers?"

"She hath refused to do his bidding in this matter," she replied, and then she looked steadily in my eyes.

"You love her, Roderick, don't you?"

"Ay," I replied, "I do; and even although she scorns me, I love her more than when I went away three years ago."

"And you have sacrificed her love for what you believe to be the call of God?"

"How could I do other, mother?"

"It is God's will, Roderick, and perchance it is better so. Rosiland is more bitter even than your father against you. She grows angry even at the mention of your name. She is a strange child, and she is a good child; but she is not for you, my son."

"At least save her from wedding that Ralph Greenvil."

"It will not be so easy," said my mother.

"How?" I asked.

"Sir Bevil is dead, and it is said that Ralph will inherit his father's name and title. He hath already asked for her hand in marriage."

"But there is another brother."

"It is reported that he hath been killed."

"And Rosiland cares for him?"

"Of late she will tell me nothing; but I judge that she favours him much."

"Save her from him, mother."

"Hark! your father needs me. God be with you, my son. Tell me whither you think of going?"

"I go to seek admission into the army of Oliver Cromwell," I said.

"God be with you," she said again as she embraced me, and then she could no longer keep the tears from her eyes.

The dawn was just appearing as I left my father's house; already the eastern sky was becoming red. I

looked up to the window of my father's room, and I noticed that the light was still burning. Then I turned to the room where Rosiland used to sleep. I thought I saw her face at the window, but I was not sure, for the light was yet dim. I stopped and looked steadily.

"If she hath still a kindly feeling towards me, she will make it known," I thought. But I saw no sign. If it was she I saw, she still treated me with coldness and scorn; so, bracing myself up as well as I could, I sped along towards old Adam Truscott's cottage. And that was how I visited my home for the first time, after more than three years of absence.

"She does not love me; she never will love me again," I said to myself; for I felt sure that if my mother could have given me one word to brighten my dark sky she would have given it, for, mother-like, she had easily guessed the secret of my heart.

I found the mare Blossom close by the gates as I came back, but I could not see Adam. Twice did I call him by name, but no one replied, whereupon I mounted Blossom and rode away.

Naught would be gained by telling how I returned to London, or of the means I had to adopt in order to get there. For, as may be imagined, the country from Launceston to Exeter was full of the King's soldiers, who boasted that they had driven every rebel out of Cornwall and Devon. Suffice it to say that I got past them without mishap, and in due time reached London town.

I should have sought to rejoin the army of Essex near Taunton, but I could not bear the thought of fighting against my brothers. Besides, my mother had urged me to make my way to the north, and as

this fell in with my plans to join Cromwell's standard, I lost no time on my way. When I reached London I inquired diligently of many if they knew where Master Cromwell's army was, but to this I got no reply. Some said he was at Nottingham, fighting the King there. Others said he had gone to Scotland in order to bring the Presbyterians to his way of thinking; others still had it that Prince Rupert had killed him; so that with all these conflicting stories I knew not what road to take.

Presently I minded me of Master Andrew Marlow, the Separatist preacher, who I knew was much in Cromwell's confidence, so I at length found my way to his house, and was speedily given admission. The old woman who had tended me in my sickness bade me welcome, telling me at the same time that ever since the time I had been an inmate of the house, Master Marlow had kept her as a companion for his daughter Rachel.

"You see," explained the old dame, "Master Marlow hath been much away, preaching the true gospel, for since the devil hath been chained many Independent congregations have sprung up all over the land, and Master Marlow is a powerful persuader, proving Scripture by Scripture."

"Is the devil chained?" I asked with a smile.

"Ay, that he is; he hath been in prison for many months."

"Where?"

"In London. Knew you not that the Reading clothier was in the Tower? Ah, young master, great be the victories of faith. Every day is the Scripture fulfilled. Through faith we have wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness we have been made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. This is the Lord's doings, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

"And is Master Marlow in London now?" I asked.

"Ay, that he is, and he will be home presently, for the night waxeth late. Hark! that is surely Rachel's footstep."

And so it proved, for a little later she came into the room where I was. She blushed finely when she saw me, which I thought showed her pleasure at seeing me safe and sound, although I could not understand why she should become pale so soon after.

"My father will be home soon, Master Falkland," she said, "and he will be well pleased to see you. Night and morning have we prayed that you might be preserved from all danger."

At this the old dame hurried away to get me food, whereupon Rachel seemed, as I thought, uneasy, for she looked around the room and out of the window, as though expecting some one.

"If you have aught to do," I said, "pray do not let me keep you from your duties. And yet if you have time to spare I would like further speech with you."

"I have naught to do, Master Falkland, and I should like to hear well how the Lord hath preserved you from danger."

"As to that, presently," I replied. "Hath your cousin visited you of late?"

At this she was silent.

"Have you seen Reuben Pilcher since I saw you last?" I urged.

"Ay, I have seen him. I little like speaking ill of

my cousin, especially as he professes to have returned to the fold from which he awhiles wandered."

"What fold?" I asked.

"The fold of the true gospel. My father believes most profoundly in his conversion, and since he hath not of late been seen with the King's men, I would fain believe him sincere. And yet——"

Here she stopped, and flushed painfully.

"You have something on your mind, Mistress Rachel," I said. "Once you told me that I might look upon you as a sister; may I not also say that I would like you to think of me as a brother? It is little I can do, but my heart is fixed to serve you."

She was silent for a few moments, then she seemed to make a resolution.

"Perchance I ought not to tell you, Master Falkland; you see it is hard to keep a secret in my heart. I do not trust my cousin, because he tells me it is for my sake that he hath become converted."

"He professes to love you?"

"Ay, and he hath won my father to his side. He hath some worldly goods, and my father is anxious that I should have some one to care for me if aught happened to him. Yet do I not love him, neither do I trust him."

"He was much with Master Ralph Greenvil during my sickness, was he not?" I asked.

"Ay, that he was, and even yet I do not understand many things which he says about him. It seems that he went away with him. In truth, he once admitted that he visited your home in the West Country. He hath it that you be one without faith, and without morals."

"Mistress Rachel——"

"If I am to be your sister, why do you call me mistress?" she asked coyly.

"Because you would not call me Roderick," I made answer; whereupon a curious light came into her eyes, but she did not speak.

"So far do I wish you to be my sister, that I feel I must tell you what I can tell to very few people," I went on. "You will perchance remember that, when I was brought wounded and bleeding to this house, I asked eagerly after a sachet."

"Ay, I remember well." Whereupon she blushed again, which made her very beautiful to behold; in truth, I think that, with the exception of Rosiland, she was the fairest maid I had ever seen.

"I want to tell you the story of that sachet," I went on; "for although the happiness which I once hoped for can never be mine, yet do I desire to defend my honour as a Christian gentleman."

After this I told her of the coming of Rosiland to my old home, how we learnt to love each other, and how when I left my home she gave me the sachet.

"What was written in the letter it contained," I went on, "is not for me to say; yet was it of such a nature that if a man made light of it, that man was both a traitor and a coward. The love of Rosiland is not for me now, for she not only scorns me but hates me. She hath no patience with any who fight against the King's cause, thus have I fallen under her anger. She thinks of me with less kindness than she thinks of my father's grooms, and had she her way she would have me gibbeted by the King's men."

"How do you know?" she asked eagerly.

"Because I have but lately seen her."

"How? when?" and her voice trembled.

On this I told her of my experiences at Stratton Hill, and at Launceston Castle, and how, although I had entered by stealth into my father's house, she had spoken no kind word.

"And yet you told her while you were in prison that you had never given away the sachet?" she replied.

"Ay, that I did," I replied.

"And she did not believe you?"

"She met my words with scornful anger. She believeth in nothing that I said."

"And what if she could be made to believe in the truth of your words, Master Falkland?"

"Then would she at least know that in that matter I acted honourably, even although I was a fool," I replied. "Not that it would ever make her think kindly of me again, for she scorns all the King's enemies. Besides, she is a Romanist, while I have learnt to hate Romanism with a great hatred, believing it to lie at the heart of my country's trouble. As a consequence there is an inseparable barrier between us. Nevertheless, I do desire her to know that I did not prove false to her love."

"And how can she know that?" she asked.

"She has been told that I gave her sachet to another woman, and that this woman sold it for a sum of money."

"Who told her this?"

"Either Master Ralph Greenvil, who wishes to wed her, or one of his minions."

"And who is the woman she believes you gave it to?"

"To you, Mistress Rachel."

"To me!"

"Ay, to you."

For a time she looked at me with great wonder in her soft grey eyes, and then I thought she seemed to be struggling with some great emotion, for her hands trembled violently.

"But what can be done?" she said presently, speaking as I thought like one bewildered.

"Nothing, I am afraid," I replied; "and yet, Mistress Rachel, if it should be possible for you to send her a message—if one of your people ever travel thither, and you could write a letter telling the whole truth—it might be that she could be led to believe in me."

"She would not believe my letter," she replied. "If she holds to what she has heard, in spite of what you have told her, then would she say that you and I have acted in concert, in order to deceive her further. Besides, when she knows that my father is a preacher of the Word, and that I am of his persuasion, she would close her heart against my word. For alas, according to what you say, she is still in the gall of bitterness."

At this moment not only did the old serving woman come into the room with food, but Master Andrew Marlow also returned. The Separatist preacher greeted me with great warmth, and listened with much attention to my experiences, after which he informed me that the victories of the King had aroused men of God to greater activity.

"Oliver Cromwell hath it," cried Master Marlow, "that this battle will never be won by an arm of flesh. He says that the Parliamentary defeat in Cornwall is God's chastisement upon those who believe that victory can be won without prayer and

fasting. He urges that every soldier should be a man of God, who believes he is fighting the Lord's battles. Therefore is he forming his army according to this standard. When it became known that the cause was lost in the West of England, many were for surrendering all to the King; but Master Cromwell turned the defeat into a victory. Even now he is in Lincolnshire gathering an army together, who shall go into battle like the soldiers of Gideon crying, 'The sword of the Lord!'"

"In Lincolnshire?" I said; "what part of the county?"

"A man came to me from him but to-day," he replied. "He is at present not far from the town of Peterborough, where he will stay some days."

After this Master Marlow went on to say that men of all sorts flocked to Cromwell's standard, but that the stern Puritan, before allowing any man to join his forces, held converse with him himself, so that he could be sure that he was worthy.

"I hear that he is held up to scorn by those of high degree," cried the old preacher. "They be saying that he is making officers of grocers, and blacksmiths, and shoemakers, and that none but a man of gentle blood can command. But Master Cromwell heeds them not; he hath it that one man of faith and of purity of life is worth ten swearing swashbucklers, be their birth noble or lowly."

The next day I started for Peterborough, which I reached in two days. When I drew near the town I overtook a man mounted on a good horse, and, as I thought, sat the animal like a good horseman.

"Good day, young master," he said familiarly, as I came up. "You seem in haste."

"Ay," I replied.

"Seek you General Cromwell's forces?" he asked.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because by the look of you I judge that to be your mission, and as I be minded to fight under him, we may go together."

I could not well refuse him, so we travelled side by side, whereupon he told me that he had fought under Essex and Manchester.

"But they be not thorough enough for me," he cried. "Essex always fights weakly when the King is near, and urges that no man must touch the sacred person of His Majesty. That is all wind, young master. I am a fighter, and in this war I would as soon kill the King as another. That is why I join this psalm-singing fellow. Not that I believe much in his psalms, but I do believe in him as a fighter."

A little later we saw a great concourse of men, and as we drew near we were asked our business. When we told what was in our hearts, a tall, strong man in sombre attire shook his head doubtfully.

"It is not for me to say, Master Coxcombs," he said; "but methinks Master Cromwell will send you about your business in quick time."

Nevertheless, five minutes later we were ushered into the presence of Oliver Cromwell, who, as all the world knows, presently became the greatest man in England.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW CROMWELL RECEIVED HIS MEN INTO HIS COMPANY

CROMWELL was seated in the kitchen of a farm house as we entered, and no sooner was he told that two men desired to see him than he cast his eyes towards us. For a minute or more he spoke no word. Rather he examined us attentively in silence, as though he were taking stock of our quality.

"Your name, my master?" He spoke to my companion first.

"Henry Widmore, nephew of Sir William Widmore, of Widmore Hall," he replied confidently.

"Ay, and what has thou done all thy life?"

"Lived at home until three years ago, when the war broke out."

"And you are well-nigh thirty years of age now?"

"Yes," replied the man.

"Then how was your life spent between the time of your coming of age and the breaking out of the war?"

"In doing naught particular," replied my companion jauntily. "Still, I took my place among those of my own quality as every man should."

"You have fought in the wars?"

"Ay, under my Lords Essex and Manchester, and others."

"Then why have you come to me?"

Master Henry Widmore shrugged his shoulders after the French fashion.

"When I fight, I fight," he answered. "I love not a commander who when he hath victory in his hands is afraid to take it. When I said I would fight against the King I meant it. I love him not, neither have I any foolish thoughts about his kingship. Essex, as some one hath said, 'Is willing to wound, but afraid to strike,' and that is not according to my liking."

"You wish to fight to the death?"

"Ay, to the death. I love a good fight, and although I was tempted to take sides with the King, yet because I like him not, on account of the trick he played with my family, I determined to strike a blow for the other side."

"Why on the other side?"

"Oh, for one thing we shall be free of that meddling churchman Laud, and methinks also there may be opportunities for the advancement of a capable soldier under a different order of things."

During this conversation Cromwell neither raised his voice above the ordinary tones in which a man may speak to another, neither did he show either favour or disfavour towards the man's manner of speech.

"You have not yet answered my question as to why you seek service under me," he said presently.

"I thought I explained," replied Master Henry Widmore jauntily. "As I said, I love a fight, and I am told that you mean carrying the thing through. You belong to the Root and Branch party, and that, I take it, means doing away with Charles Stuart

and his crew, and putting your own men in their place. I have been told also that you want brave men, men who can die with a shout of defiance at the enemy."

Cromwell turned upon him sharply.

"Are you a man of God, Master Widmore?" he said sternly.

"I have as much religion as is good for me," he replied.

"And you are sober, and love not drinking nor carousing?"

"Oh, I can drink my ale with any man, and can be as good a boon companion as another," he replied. "As for religion, let every man do as he likes, believe as he likes, I say. If he chooses to pray, let him pray, and if he doth not choose let him do the other thing."

"Master Henry Widmore, you may go your way," said Cromwell: "you are no fit man for my army."

The man at my side uttered a savage oath, and seemed overwhelmed with astonishment.

"I thought you wanted fighters," he cried.

"Ay, and men of God, who fight for God," replied Cromwell. "The Lord hath no need of swash-bucklers, nor of braggarts, Master Widmore, and thus He hath no need of thee. Even now thou hast been drinking heavily, and thou hast come here as though we were but a company of heathens. Go thy way, Master Widmore, and may the Lord convert thy soul."

There was something in Cromwell's speech which, even although he did not speak to me, well-nigh made me tremble. As I said, he spoke quietly, yet his words seemed to wither one. Even Master

Widmore, confident and gay as he had been, seemed to become small and shabby. The flesh on his cheeks hung loose, and a look of fear came into his eyes. Even I wondered that such as he should have sought to join Cromwell's Company, but as I heard afterwards, many rumours were rife concerning the Puritan general. Many had it that he used religion as a cloak, and wanted only a daredevil crew who would do his will without question. Others had it that he sought to gain paramount influence in the army, and thus throughout the country, by attracting to his side so much power that the nation must perforce obey him. And I doubt not Master Henry Widmore, who I afterwards discovered was a worthless scapegrace, having heard these rumours, came to him with great confidence.

"You have mistaken your place, Master Widmore," went on Cromwell. "Such as you should be with Prince Rupert, and not with one who fights only for the love of God, and the progress of God's truth and justice."

By this time Master Widmore had recovered himself, and being still, as I believe, under the influence of strong waters, he cried out savagely:

"Ay, and I will go to Prince Rupert, too. A man who can fight and drink and love and still be a gay cavalier is the man for me," and then he turned on his heel, and walked away.

For a minute Cromwell was silent. He looked not at me, but as I thought at some distant object which he could see through the window of the room. Both anger and disappointment were in his eyes. Yet there was no sign of weakness, nor even of impatience. I noted that he seemed much older than when I had

seen him in his own house at Ely, more than three years before, but he had lost none of the stern power which had so impressed me then. Nay, rather it seemed increased. A great confidence seemed to possess him, a confidence that I could not explain, especially when I remembered that the Parliamentary cause had not gained much ground, even although Strafford was dead and Laud was in prison, while the King dared not return to London.

"Well, Master Falkland."

He had turned suddenly upon me, and I felt that he was reading me, even like a learned clerk might read a book.

"You see I remember you," he went on, "although it is more than three years ago since I saw you. More than that, I have heard somewhat concerning you."

I did not speak, partly because there seemed no need, and partly because, as it seemed to me, he did not wish me to answer him.

"Come, tell me why you have come hither?" he said presently.

"To seek to join your Company, Master Cromwell."

"Ay, but why?"

"Because it seems as though God would have it so," I replied.

"As to that, let us see," he made answer. "And so, although I am not ignorant of much that hath taken place concerning thee since thy visit to my house at Ely, I would have thee tell me thy story without hiding anything."

There was a touch of kindness in his voice, which I had not hitherto noticed, and so, almost in spite of myself, I spoke freely. I told him of

all that had taken place since I had seen him at Ely, not even omitting the loss of the sachet.

"Ay, Essex told me about that Popish business," he said, like a man communing with himself. "That is just like them. Strafford would glory in such a plan, so would Laud—as for Charles, nothing is too shifty for him. Well, Strafford is dead, Laud is in prison, where, the Almighty aiding me, he shall be kept for a while; while Charles Stuart—ah well, God hath not finished with him yet."

Upon this he walked up and down the room even as he had walked when I saw him at Ely, and seemed to be communing with his own soul.

"Well, and thou didst refuse this thing, Master Falkland?"

"Ay, I refused."

"Why?"

"Because when I left home I promised my mother I would obey my conscience."

"And didst thou pray that God would guide thee?"

"Ay, I did, Master Cromwell."

"And this led to thy fighting against thy own father and brothers."

At this I was silent, for even then the memory of my father came back to me.

"Ah, war is a terrible thing," he went on, "and should only be entered upon for God's truth and God's glory. Remember that, Master Falkland. A soldier, unless he feels that he is fighting God's battle, is but a butcher of men. There is no glory in war, save the glory of being willing to lay down one's life for a righteous cause. Well, and so the battle of Stratton Hill was lost?"

"Ay, so I have heard."

"The Cornishmen fought bravely, I am told."

"Ay, to that I can testify."

"Shall I tell you why, Master Falkland? It was because they had a cause. They believed in the monarchy because their masters believed. No man can fight as a man should fight unless he believes in his cause, ay, and a great cause."

I could see that he regarded me kindly, and I knew that I should not be sent away like Master Widmore. Rather, I thought he spoke to me as though he were interested in my welfare; moreover, he seemed to trust me, and to think of me as one worthy to have his confidence.

"It is as I have said all along," he continued. "Our soldiers have failed because we have taken any man, bad or good. If we take a servant into our own household, we see to it that he or she is honest and God-fearing, but we take any man to fight for God's cause. Hence we have had a roystering, God-forgetting crew. Men who have cared but little for justice or religion. I told Manchester this, I told Essex this. 'God cannot bless such fighters,' I said; 'we are fighting for religion, for God.' But they believed it not. Now they are beginning to see. Already did my company save the situation at Grantham last month. When the paid cutthroats would give way, then did my men who believed in God march forward, and drive the Philistines before them. And they shall see greater things yet, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. For mark you, Master Falkland, this is more than a battle against the King's tyranny; it is against all tyranny. This war must continue until godliness shall be triumphant —ay, and until there shall be religious liberty and

equality. Men have scorned the Separatists, those who believe that they should have the right to pray and worship according to their consciences. After all, Laud was right when he said that the Independents would have no more liberty under the Presbyterians than under him. Laud wanted tests, and the Presbyterians wanted tests, and as a wise man hath said, 'the new Presbyter is only the old priest writ large.' Laud would have religion according to his pattern, while the Scotch would force religion, after their pattern; but it shall not be so. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' And it shall come to pass that all men shall be equal in the eyes of the country, as well as in the eyes of God. God will have it so!"

His voice trembled as he spoke, while a look which I could not understand came into his eyes.

"Then will you receive me into your Company, General Cromwell?" I said.

"You believe this is God's battle?" he said sharply.

"Ah, I do," he replied.

"And it is clear to you that among my men there is no drinking, no profane oaths, no loose living?"

"Ay, I understand that."

"And you will fight believing that,—ay, and fight to the death for the cause of justice, of religion, and religious liberty?"

"That is why I have come to you," I replied.

"Then may the Lord welcome you, and bless you, as I do," he said solemnly, and with that he spoke to me like a father might speak to a son.

"Let us pray together," he said, and we knelt down side by side.

"I SAW A GREAT CONCOURSE OF MEN GATHERED TOGETHER, EACH MAN STANDING QUIETLY AND CONFIDENTLY, WHILE MANY TURNED THEIR EYES TOWARDS HEAVEN."

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"God of battles," he said, "Thou who dost see all things, and who dost uphold all things by the might of Thy right hand, bless this youth whom we receive into Thine army. Guard his goings out, and his comings in. May he feel that he is carrying the sword of the Lord, and if it be Thy Will, may the sun not smite him by day, neither the moon by night. Be his shield and his buckler in battle, and his portion for ever. Bless this holy war in which we are engaged, and even as the Children of Israel under Joshua of olden time, drove the Amorite, the Hittite, and the Jebusite before them, so may we put Thine enemies to flight, until no man shall need to say, 'Know ye the Lord,' but when all shall know Thee, even from the rivers to the ends of the earth."

As we rose from our knees I heard a great noise of many voices, so that I thought an enemy was approaching; but in this my fears were quieted, for on looking out of the window I saw a great concourse of men gathered together, each man standing quietly and confidently, while many turned their eyes towards heaven.

"It is the time of evening prayer, Master Falkland; let us join them," said Cromwell.

We left the farm kitchen together, and went into the field close by. It was such a sight as I had never seen before, and a kind of awe came into my heart as I looked. How many were there I know not, but it was a great multitude. All of them were dressed in somewhat sombre garments, while many held their Bibles open before them. But those who had none seemed to lack naught, for they sang even as the others.

It did not seem to me even then that the singing was of any great sweetness, for each man sang in his own key. Men past their prime were there, who seemed to have no thought of melody, while lads even younger than myself made their clear voices heard above the somewhat melancholy notes of the older men. And yet what I heard remains with me to this day—ay, and will remain till memory is no more. For I saw that each man believed in what he was singing.

The time was June, and the sun was setting in a cloudless sky, lighting up a great flat tract of land with glory. Even as I looked I saw beyond the great concourse of men a church steeple which caught the gleams of the setting sun. I saw two humble cottages nestling among the trees, while all around the flowers grew, and the leaves rustled in the light summer breeze. Now and then, when there was a pause in the singing, I heard the birds chirping, while the cattle in the fields close by stood looking as if in wonder.

But I do not think Cromwell's army saw aught of these things—nay, for that matter, I do not believe they saw Cromwell himself, who accompanied me. They were all intent upon the words they sang, words which they believed came from God to them. Moreover, when I thought of them it did not seem strange, for the message was of wondrous sweetness.

Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!

Many are they that rise up against me.

Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God.

But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head.

I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.

I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.

I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.

Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone, thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; thy blessing is upon thy people.

I had heard this same psalm sung in our old Launceston Church more than once, and had thought nothing of it; but that night every word was possessed of a new meaning. For I say again, every word seemed real to those men. When they sang "*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about,*" their voices rang out triumphantly. There was a look of confidence in their eyes, and I felt then, as I have felt since, that those men could not be conquered. Slain they might be, but conquered never, for they felt that God was by their side and gave strength to their arms.

And yet no tender thoughts came into my mind, even although there was much tenderness in the words. Rather a kind of grim determination possessed me as I listened. For every man's face was set and stern, except for a kind of joy which I thought they felt when they sang, "*Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone, thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.*"

I say there was a kind of joy as they sang this;

nay, more, their voices were exultant, as though they rejoiced to think of their enemies being overthrown.

After the singing was ended they all knelt down as one man, while a clean-shaven, black-coated man offered a prayer. But this did not help me overmuch, for as far as I could judge there was not much love in his heart. His voice was loud and strident, and must have been heard by every one, even to the very outskirts of the great multitude. I noticed, too, that many said "Amen," as if to punctuate his words; yet, although I felt their cause just, I could not join them, for he prayed that evil might come upon those who were against them, and that God's mercy should not come near them. And even although he did but quote the Psalms in the Bible, I could not say "Amen," for I believed then, as I know now, that there is no limit to the mercy of God.

Afterwards I found that what I have tried to describe here took place night and morning in Cromwell's army. Before going to rest they sang a psalm, and some man of God offered prayer; and when they arose in the morning they did the same thing, every man, as far as I could judge, joining willingly.

It has been said that in those terrible fights which followed Cromwell's army was never defeated, because their battles were always won before they rose from their knees. Certain it is they never feared, even when the tempest of war was raging, and when men were falling on the right hand and on the left. But of this I must not speak now, or I should, as it were, forestall the story I have to tell. For though I can do but slender justice to the scenes which soon

followed in quick succession, yet must I speak of them if I am faithful to the story of my life. And although it requireth some restraint to keep me from rushing on to those great deeds, which even now cause my blood to tingle and my heart to beat aloud, yet must I speak of things as they happened, or those same great deeds will lose their true meaning.

"Roderick Falkland," said Oliver Cromwell to me when the man had finished praying and the men sought their places of rest, "I would that you and my son Oliver should become acquainted."

Whereupon he led me to the young man whom I had seen at Ely, and who now greeted me warmly.

CHAPTER XIX

CROMWELL'S BUSINESS WITH THE WIDOW WILSON

After the evening of which I have written, I saw but little of Master Cromwell for many days. He had many matters to attend to of which I was ignorant, and more than that he was not one, who as the soldiers had it, "made fish of one, and flesh of another." He was stern in his discipline, and exacted from every man his duty regardless of name or condition. Even his son Oliver was no exception to this rule, much as I knew his father loved him. I found young Oliver to be somewhat of the same nature as his father, although not cast in so large a mould, either of mind or body. And this I say without disparagement to the brave young Puritan who died bravely some eleven months after I joined his father's Company. For I soon discovered that although the Puritan general possessed none of the military graces which characterised such men as Essex, he had far greater insight into the heart of things. Nay, take him altogether, I never met any man whose eyes penetrated the trappings of a thing so quickly as Cromwell. He could sift the chaff from the wheat in any plan, even before the plan was well laid before him, and as I afterwards proved when it came to a pitched battle, he knew more about war than all the

rest of the generals put together. And this, not because he was trained to soldiering, but because of his strong rugged common-sense. Without knowing the soldier's rules of war, he saw as if by instinct how his forces should be arranged—ay, and saw too the weak points in his enemy's armour. Some have it that Cromwell's soldiers won their battles because they knew not the meaning of fear, and because they were confident that God was on their side, yet any man with half an eye could see that he left nothing to chance, or for that matter to Providence. "Prepare for battle as though there were no God to help you, and then fight knowing that God will never forsake you," was one of his mottoes, and to this he was ever true. Even the wisest of soldiers have since told me, that for real masterly stratagem Cromwell was the greatest soldier England had ever produced. So that when I say young Oliver was cast in a smaller mould than his father, I say nothing to belittle him. He knew it himself, even as did every man who followed the great leader who changed the life of the British Isles.

During the next few months young Oliver and I became fast friends, and his father, as he saw our growing affection for each other, said no word to discourage us. Rather, he regarded it with approval, especially when during the battle at Gainsborough I was able to prove to him that I had not joined his Company for an idle pastime, but to fight for the welfare of the land.

I saw, too, as the time went by, that Master Cromwell grew more and more dissatisfied with the conduct of the Scotch. There was little wonder at this, for I was not long in discovering that the Presbyterians

despised his Company, as much as did the soldiers of Charles. In truth, it soon became more and more evident, that as far as true liberty was concerned, there would be just as little under the Presbytery as under the priests. They wanted to compel every one to subscribe to one kind of religion, while the priests had it that every one should conform to another. Thus both the English and Scotch Presbyterians would, if they dared, have made short work of many of Cromwell's men. For, as I have before made plain, they pleaded for the right to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences. They declared that they would no more be compelled to conform to the Presbyterian pattern than to that of Laud. In this, even at this time, Cromwell agreed with them. He had never supported the Covenant which had been sworn to during the previous October at Westminster, and although he had not opposed Pym, owing to his great admiration for him, yet he writhed under its restrictions, and spared no pains to make it null and void.

"Well, Master Cromwell," said Lord Manchester to him after the victory of the Parliamentary Army at Gainsborough, and largely through which Cromwell's name rang through England as a great General, "that Company of yours fought well."

"Ay, my lord, there is but little doubt of that."

"The battle would have been lost without that motley crew of yours."

"'So be it,' to that also, my lord," was the reply; "and do you know why?"

"Partly because they believed in their commander," replied Lord Manchester, with a smile.

"You are right there, my lord; but who think you their Commander is?"

"I see him before me."

"I would that you did, my lord, for then would you see the King of Battles, even as Moses saw Him on Mount Sinai. For God is the Commander under which my soldiers fight. And that is where you and others make your great mistake. It is even as I said to my dear friend Master John Hampden. 'The soldiers of Parliament,' I said to him, 'are most of them old decayed serving men, and tapsters, and such kind of fellows, while the King's soldiers are gentlemen's sons; do you think that the spirits of such base and mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen, that have honour and courage and resolution in them? You must have men of a spirit that will go as far as these gentlemen will go.' Master Hampden did think I talked a good notion, but an impracticable one, whereupon I told him that I could do somewhat in it. Well, I *have* done somewhat in it. I have got hold of men who believe in the *cause*, and who believe in God. I have no roystering, swearing braggarts in my Company. If any man gets drunk, or uses a profane oath, he has to pay his twelve pence as a fine, while if any be found looting or stealing they be handed over to the enemy for punishment. Well, and what hath been the result? Both at Grantham, and at Gainsborough, when the rest were prepared to run away, and yielded to the charge of the King's soldiers, my men went forward in God's name, and won for us great victories."

"Ay, that is true," replied Lord Manchester, "yet they be but a motley crew."

"A motley crew!" cried Cromwell; "ay, you may say that, but they can fight. A motley crew! Ah, well, they be mostly young farmers and yeomen, with here and there the son of a gentleman, who have left their farms and their homes at the call of God, hoping to return to them again when our troubles are over. But meanwhile, they fight for God, and they fight for their faith."

"Faith!" replied Lord Manchester; "but what faith? Independents, Anabaptists, Brownists, Bible fanatics."

"It is always well to speak good things of the bridge that hath carried you across the stream," replied Cromwell. "And in any case, these men stood firm while the others yielded, they rushed on to victory while the others held back. The religion of these men is a real thing, a religion which they have fought for on the battlefield of their own souls, and thus it is a religion which makes them fight for God."

"But think where this will lead," said Manchester. "Where will be our conformity? What becomes of the Covenant, and because of the Covenant, the help of the Scots?"

"I like not the Covenant," replied Cromwell. "It spells slavery."

"I know that for years you have had strange views," replied Manchester. "Even before the war, Strafford had it that you were an Independent at heart."

"I beseech you that you despise not these men, my lord," cried Cromwell, "for if you do, ay, and if you persecute them as the Presbyterians desire to do until they leave the army, then is our cause lost, for as the Lord liveth, they, and they only, will save our country."

It will be seen by this how Cromwell's "lovely Company," as it was called, was regarded by both the Laudites and the Presbyterians, and but for the fact that the men were such splendid soldiers, I have no doubt but that the Covenant would have been enforced with vigour. But this was where Cromwell and all the nation had advantage. Before he gathered these men of varying creeds together the Parliamentary cause was well-nigh lost, but after their appearing everything bore a new aspect. Defeat was turned into victory, and although both Cromwell and his army were laughed at as a "psalm-singing crew," yet were they spoken of as "terrible fighters."

After the battle of Gainsborough no great event took place for some time, and although we moved steadily northward, nothing of a decisive nature took place. This grieved me sorely, for inactivity was terribly hard to bear. For no sooner had I an hour's idleness than I fell to brooding over the past. Day by day I felt that the gulf between me and all my past life was widening. I reflected that the part I had taken at the battle of Gainsborough under Cromwell must eventually reach my father's ears. This would, if it were possible, embitter him against me more than ever. As for Rosiland, all hope concerning her was gone. She believed that I had been unfaithful to her, as well as to the King, and she had cast me off for ever.

I was thinking of all these things one night when young Oliver Cromwell came to me.

"My father hath need of you," he said quietly.

"Where is he?" I asked.

"Not far away. He hath but just returned from London, and no sooner was he in our midst than

many desired to have converse with him. So far, however, he hath only given audience to one person."

"Ay," I replied, scarcely giving him half my attention, for I could not drive my sorrow out of my heart.

"Ay, only one," went on young Oliver, "and that is a poor dame who hath come from Spalding."

"A poor dame," I repeated.

"It is concerning her that my father desires to speak with you."

We walked side by side until we reached the general's tent. On entering, I found that it was even as young Oliver had said. Cromwell was alone with a poor, sad-eyed woman, who had evidently been weeping bitterly. I judged, moreover, that she had impressed him greatly, for I noticed that look in his eyes which was always present when he had a problem of more than usual importance to solve.

"Master Falkland," he said, when I entered, "I have sent for you that you may hear the story that Dame Wilson hath told me." Then turning to the woman, he said, "I desire that you tell this young man all you have told me."

"I' truth, Master Cromwell," replied the dame, "it is hard to tell it, for Johnnie is my only boy, and it well-nigh breaks my heart to think of him in the hands of these ungodly men; especially as he sought to do his duty, and believed that he was serving God."

"What did he do?" asked Cromwell.

"As to that, Master Cromwell, you know better than I; for I am told it was by your orders that he was sent to Beeston to find out things about Prince Rupert's army. It was e'en like sending a lamb

among wolves, for he is but a boy of nineteen, and knew not the ways of these sons of Belial. Therefore it was no wonder he was caught."

"But not before he had been able to find out that which I sent him to discover—ay, and to pass it on to another in my confidence," replied Cromwell. "In truth, but for Johnnie Wilson I verily believe this same Prince Rupert would have taken us unawares."

"Ay, that was but natural," replied the dame, "for my Johnnie is a clever boy, as all who know him can tell. I am told, too, that he well-nigh escaped the King's soldiers altogether, but he was taken, and the news was brought to me only yestermorn that Prince Rupert was so angry with him, not only for finding out his plans, but for refusing to tell aught of yours, that he is to be hanged as a spy, and that before many days have passed away. Some have it that he is e'en put to torture, in order that he may be made to tell what he knows. Ay, and Master Cromwell, this is terrible to think of, even although I feel sure he will die in the faith of Christ, for he is my only son, born, as I may say, after I had ceased to hope for a child. His father died soon after he was three years old, and I had to earn bread for him and myself too. And this was hard, Master Cromwell, for my farm is small, and I could ill afford to pay for hired servants. But I did it, and God rewarded me. If my Johnnie is hanged as a spy, then shall I never be able to smile again, for he is all I have in this world."

"And what think you I can do?" asked Cromwell, almost sternly. "He hath put his hand to the plough, and our Lord never promised His disciples that they should lie on a bed of roses."

"Nay, but He had mercy on the widow of Nain," replied the woman, "and He gave her son back to her."

"And thinkest thou that our Lord will work a miracle for thee?"

"Ay, as to that I have never ceased praying for my Johnnie, and although I seem to have no hope, yet cannot I believe that the Lord will let my prayers go unanswered. Nay, though my faith is not even so much as a grain of mustard seed, yet cannot I believe that our Lord, who laid down His life for sinners, will suffer my Johnnie to die."

"Then why hast thou come to me, dame?"

"Because I am a weak and foolish woman, while men say that you be a man of God, Master Cromwell—wise in counsel, and, like David of old, a mighty man of battle."

"Ay, but, dame, in order to save your son, I must e'en march upon Prince Rupert's army; I must conquer it, and take, as it were, thy son from between the very paws of the lion."

"The Lord shut the lions' mouths when that man of God, Daniel, was thrown into their midst," replied the dame, "and oh, Master Cromwell, my Johnnie is all I have."

"Ay, but the Lord would not have us be fools," he said like one musing. "It is but a false faith, if we believe that God will help us when we be neither prepared, nor know the best way to attack our enemy. Rupert is now near Doncaster, and hath, I am informed, received reinforcements; so that to attack him now would be but to court defeat. And yet, Dame Wilson, I grieve because of this trouble that hath fallen on you. Your Johnnie is a brave boy,

and a boy that fears the Lord, and yet I see no way to rescue him—except——"

Here he paused, and looked steadily towards me.

"Except some man be willing to take his place," he continued presently.

"What, another die in my Johnnie's stead!" cried the woman, with wide open eyes.

"Ay, perchance if some one would go to Prince Rupert with a letter from me, offering to take his place, then do I believe your son would be sent back to you. But this Rupert would not take a low-born common fellow in his stead. He must needs be one who hath shown that he can fight bravely," and again he looked at me.

"Oh, Master Cromwell," cried the woman, sobbing as though her heart would break, "I like not to think of this; nay, I do not think I could bear it; yet my Johnnie is all I have, the only stay to my old age."

Now I saw Master Cromwell's thought in bringing me to him, although why he should have fixed on me I could not tell, for I prided myself that he could ill spare me, not only because I was said to have more scholarship than most of his Company, but because I had proved myself both brave and wise. Yet as I saw the poor dame before him sobbing out her heart's woes, my heart was moved to a great pity, for I could see that she was distraught by grief.

Why, I asked myself, had I not been taken prisoner instead of this Johnnie Wilson, the only son of his widowed mother? It is true my mother loved me, but then she had other sons, and besides, except for my mother, no one would miss me if I died.

What I did, therefore, was a matter of no great virtue, as can easily be seen. My life was well-nigh

hopeless; neither was any one dependent on me. On the other hand, this Johnnie Wilson was the apple of his mother's eye, and would, if he lived, be the stay of her old age. Without ado, therefore, I offered to take a letter from Master Cromwell to Prince Rupert, and offer to take the place of the lad whose mother knelt sobbing out her woes at my very feet.

"You count the cost, do you?" said Cromwell sternly.

"Ay," I replied, "it doth not take long to do that."

"Very well," he replied, "it shall be even as you say. Take heart, Dame Wilson; it seems to me as though the Lord hath answered your prayers."

I will not seek to put upon paper what the woman said, for not only does it not become me to write of such things, but it forms no vital part of my story.

It was some time before the poor dame was sufficiently restored to start on her homeward journey, so greatly had her grief wrought upon her, and so overwhelming was her joy at the prospect of seeing her boy again. When at length I was left alone with Master Cromwell, he sat at his table, pen in hand, as though he found difficulty in composing the letter he was to send by me.

"Hast ever seen this Prince Rupert?" he asked at length.

"Never."

"Not even when you were at York with Charles's men?"

"No.'

"What are the reports you have heard of him?"

"That he is a brave general, but somewhat unwary.

That he knows not the meaning of fear, and loves fighting for its own sake. That he is generous to his own soldiers, but pitiless towards his enemies."

"But without conscience. Hast thou heard that?"

"No."

"A godless man and a wine-bibber. Hast thou heard that?"

"No."

"I am not given to over-praise, Roderick Falkland," said Cromwell, "but thou art doing a worthy deed. Especially as thou dost expect no mercy. Thou art riding to thy death. Thou dost understand that?"

My heart grew cold at his words, for after all I was but a boy, and although my heart was wounded and bleeding, I still loved life. And now the grim reality of what I had undertaken had come upon me, I well-nigh repented of resolution. Still, I could not go back upon my word, so I replied through my set teeth, that my voice should not appear unsteady,

"Ay, I understand."

He looked at me steadily, and I thought his eyes became moist. "May the Lord preserve the lad," he said.

After that he wrote for some time in silence, never even so much as lifting his head to see if I was watching him. Presently I saw him sign his name on two pieces of paper.

"You will start at once?"

"Ay," I replied.

"A horse, not the one on which you rode when you came to me, shall be saddled for you. I have written two letters. This one will carry you safe through the

enemy's lines. You may show it to any man in authority. The other must be given only to Prince Rupert himself. You understand?"

"Ay, I understand."

At this I thought I was dismissed, and I turned on my heel to go; but he held up his hand to restrain me.

"I have only one other word to say," he said. "Whatever else Prince Rupert may be, he is a brave man, and loves a brave man. You understand that?"

"Ay, I understand that."

"Then may the Lord preserve thee," and Oliver Cromwell went back to his chair like one in a dream.

Half an hour later I was riding towards the King's Standard at Doncaster.

CHAPTER XX

HOW I WAS RECEIVED BY THE GALLANT PRINCE RUPERT

THE time, I remember, was early spring, and a cold nipping air blew across the flat country through which I rode. Above me was the pale crescent of the new moon, at one time shining brightly, and again covered by the water-laden clouds which swept across the sky. It is true April had come, but the night suggested winter rather than summer, for the rain had fallen heavily, and the roads were sodden. Moreover, the air had a dank feel with it, even although it nipped my ears and nose, as though frost was turning the rain-drops into ice-crystals.

No sound reached me save now and then the barking of a dog, or the cry of a waterfowl which sought to find rest among the overrunning dykes. Companion I had none, so that no human voice cheered me as I rode along the weary road. Right in front of me, covering a great part of the northern sky, was a great black lowering cloud, the summit of which seemed like the top of a huge mountain. It seemed to me, moreover, that it was an emblem of my life. Even as I rode towards the black thundercloud, and should soon be enveloped in its gloom, so was I riding towards the black ending of my life.

I had, up to now, reckoned that I was as brave as another man. Even at Stratton Hill I had felt no fear for my own personal safety. I had been careless as to the approach of the enemy. At Gainsborough, Cromwell had himself admitted that it was my voice and my example that had rallied more than one drooping soldier. Neither had I ever troubled about danger. The heat of battle was upon me, and although men fell around me, and although the groans of my dying comrades were hard to bear, never did my heart fail me because I knew that I might also be soon stricken down. But that night a great dread laid hold of me. More than once was I tempted to give up the mission I had undertaken, to fly to some port and leave the country for ever. For it is one thing to meet the enemy in open field, and fight man to man, ay, or even to fight against great odds, and another to go forward in cold blood to meet a death which every soldier dreads. In truth, as I sped on, knowing that every step took me nearer my doom, I cursed myself for a fool, and likened myself to Don Quixote, by whom the Spanish writer, Cervantes, had laughed at foolish and brainless adventures. I called to mind the remarks which had been made upon the book, then just beginning to be known in England, by Master Piper. I remembered the words he had spoken to me concerning it.

"Roderick," he had said, "think well and wisely before embarking upon strange adventures. To follow your heart is a great thing, but remember thou hast reason and judgment, so, in following thy heart, beware that thou dost not follow a Jack o' the lantern of foolish conceits."

And here was I going to my death because under

a great emotion I desired to save a farmer-lad. What though the widow would have been left childless, was I to thoughtlessly throw away my life? I was but a youth, having barely touched the meaning of my manhood, and yet I was rushing forward to darkness and death as though I had twenty lives to live.

My horse, too, carried me like the very genius of despair. He was a great, gaunt, sad-eyed creature, who never sought to settle down to walk, and never broke into a gallop. In truth, his pace never seemed to alter. He took no notice of dark lanes or open country. Straight on he went, with the same long, regular strides, never shying, never tripping. If he had turned sulky, or, taking the bit between his teeth, had run away, I should have rejoiced. But no; he went on sadly and steadily, as if he knew he was carrying me to my death.

By-and-by I was able to think of the whole business in a sort of grim, matter-of-fact way. After all, it didn't matter. In a few years I should be dead and forgotten, and the fact that one Roderick Falkland took it upon himself to ride through the night, and suffer death in order to save a farmer-boy, would be forgotten. Still, I should have done the thing that I ought to do. As far as I could judge, Johnnie Wilson's life was more valuable than mine. He was the support and stay of his mother, while no one depended on me.

Presently I fell to thinking of Dame Wilson's face when she realised the meaning of my words; and this led me to ask myself what my mother would say if she knew the mission on which I was bent; nay, I began to fancy that she was by my side as I rode, and then a sort of peace came over me. Again her

words came back to me: "If the will of God seems to be but a gleam in the darkness, still follow the gleam."

Well, I did not turn aside from my purpose. I had given my word to Oliver Cromwell that I would do this thing, and so I did it; although God knows that, although I persuaded myself that I was doing my duty, it brought me no feeling of joy or pride. The great cloud in front of me grew nearer and blacker, and although I rode steadily towards it, the thought that I was giving my life that a lonely widow might have light in the evening of her life gave me but scant comfort.

Presently I came to a cottage beside the road. It was now perchance four o'clock in the morning, but daylight had not yet begun to appear. I longed much for the sound of a human voice, and, seeing a light burning, I stopped my horse and shouted.

"Ay, what would you?"

"How far am I from Doncaster?"

"A matter o' six mile."

"Is it a straight road?"

"Ay, straight eno'."

"Have you seen aught of the King's army?"

"King's army! Ay, God save us—the devil's army. That's what it is!"

The door opened, and an old man appeared. Just then the moon shone clearly, and I saw him plainly. He was a little man, much bent, and very old.

"What dost a want?" he asked.

"I ride to Prince Rupert's camp," I said. "Know you where it is?"

"Ay, there wur a roysterin' crew 'ere yesterday morn, and they said that he wur two mile fro' Doncaster."

"Which direction?"

"This side. Ay, the Loard save us all. It's nowt but gunpowder and smoke, feightin' and killin'. My two sons be theer, and my owd wooman be deead. Ay, mon, but this war is nowt but devil's business."

"You are up early," I said; for although I had naught of importance to say to him, I remained with him just to hear the sound of his voice.

"Ay, I be. I canna slaip, so I just geet up an' pray. And aw say, 'Good Loard, saave my lads.' But He will na. I tell thee it's t' devil's business is this. Theer's my maister's farm. Where be the oats, the barley? It's noan planted. Why? Because all t' lads be gon' a-sodgerin'. It's kill, and kill; feight, and feight."

"Will you pray for me?" I said.

"For thee?"

"Ay."

"Why should I pray for thee?"

"Because I go to my death."

"Thou'rt noan Yorkshire?"

"No."

"What then?"

"I'm Cornish."

"Cornish, ay. I've 'eerd on't. An outlandish 'aythen plaace down in t' West. What do they call tha?"

"Roderick Falkland."

"Roderick Falkland? And where art a' baan?"

"I go to Prince Rupert."

"Why?"

"To die."

"Why art a baan to die?"

"I cannot tell you. But pray for me, will you?"

"Ay, I will. 'Appen yo' can drink a sup o' milk?"

"No. I want nothing; only pray for me. Good morning."

"Ay, I will; but tell me agean what they call thee. Thy foreign name is hard to mind."

I told him, and then rode on again. In spite of myself the incident had comforted me. The thought of the lonely old man praying for me gave me comfort.

Just then I saw a faint gleam of light in the eastern sky. "Ah, well," I thought, "the morning always follows the night." A little later I saw the tower of Doncaster Church rising high into the heavens, and then I pushed my horse forward, even as though I were riding towards friends.

"Who goes there?"

It was a soldier in gay attire who greeted me.

"A messenger to Prince Rupert."

"Dismount."

I dismounted, while several others came up.

"What are you? Cavalier or Roundhead?"

"I desire to go straight to Prince Rupert. I have a letter of importance to give to him," I replied, evading their question.

"A King's soldier," I heard one say. "Look, he has the air of a Cavalier; he wears a feather in his hat, and his curls be long."

"Nay, but he might be a Cromwell's man for all that," said another.

"Who are you—what are you?" said a third.

"If there is a man in authority among you, I will give him this letter," I said; "it will tell you who I am and what I am."

"Go and tell Captain Savile," said a man who I

judged to be a lieutenant by his uniform, and then I waited.

Presently a tall, smartly dressed officer came to me, although I judged that he had but just put on his uniform, and in a hasty fashion.

On reading my letter he looked darkly on me.

"You were at Gainsborough?" he said.

"Ay," I replied boldly enough, for now that I had men to meet, and danger to encounter, I felt my own man again.

"This is Roderick Falkland," said Captain Savile, "the fellow who did so much to defeat us at Gainsborough; he who was once on our side, and should be on our side still. His father and brothers fight for the King, but he is a rebel."

At this there was a roar of anger, and I thought by the look in their eyes they would have pounced upon me and torn me to pieces.

"Nay," cried Captain Savile. "He hath a letter to Prince Rupert, and he must go in safety. Sergeant Dixon, ay, and you, Cornet Lister, go with this Roderick Falkland to the Prince's tent."

Now, strange as it may seem, all dread and all foreboding left me at this moment. Rather I looked forward with interest to my meeting with the young Royalist general of whom such wondrous stories had been told. For he was of just the same age as myself, and yet had the King given him command of the Royal forces.

Not a word did the two men speak to me as we went forward to the Prince's tent, and I gathered by the look in their eyes that they would be far more pleased at an order to shoot me than to conduct me to the tent of their general.

It was, as I judged, well on to six o'clock, and although clouds still hung in the sky, the day bade fair to be fine. The dank, cold feeling of the night was passing away, and I heard the birds twitter on the boughs of the trees close by.

On our way to the Prince's tent we were often stopped and questioned; but no man hindered us long, and presently I realised that I had reached my destination.

Even then I could not help feeling the difference between the Royalist army and the one I had left the night before. There the men were sober, and God-fearing. Not a profane oath was heard, while no man sang a ribald song. Instead, they sang praises unto God, and offered prayers to the God of battles. Here, on the other hand, the air was full of foul language and ribald jest. All around were evidences of drinking and carousing. Moreover, the men were different. Courage there was, and that without doubt, for no man can accuse the King's men of being cowards. I had only to look into their eyes to know that they could face death. But it was the courage of men who loved fighting, and who believed in the King. In Cromwell's camp all was different. There the men loved not fighting, yet was there no wavering light in their eyes. I had again and again seen that fire of resolution which no man can describe. In truth, I felt then, as I feel now, that Prince Rupert's men fought for glory and the King, while Cromwell's men fought for conscience and God. That was why, in the great scenes of which I must presently tell, those stern men of the fens stood like rocks in an angry sea, not being broken themselves, but breaking all that fell upon them.

I waited at the entrance of Rupert's tent for full ten minutes, while curious eyes watched, and then my heart began to beat faster than its wont, for the command came to me to go into the presence of the grandson of James I.

On entering the tent I found some half-dozen men, all of whom were, as I judged, men of high degree. Indeed, I learnt afterwards that Prince Rupert had as his companions men of no less importance than Lord Newcastle, Sir William Wentworth, Sir William Langdale, and Colonel Eury; but I recked nothing of them at the time, for my eyes were fastened upon the young man whose name was known throughout the kingdom, and about whom songs had been sung in every village ale-house in the land. And this was little to be wondered at, for, first of all, he was of Royal blood and closely related to the King himself, and besides that, he had shown himself to be a daring and intrepid fighter. It is true he had not been spoken of as a man of caution, but on every hand he was hailed as the flower of English chivalry and the hope of the Royalist cause. Added to all this he was but four-and-twenty years of age, and thus his very youth surrounded him with a halo of romance, and caused him to be the idol of all the fine ladies in Charles's Court.

In truth, as I first looked upon him, I could but wonder that so large a share of responsibility had been given him, for he seemed only a gay, rollicking boy. It is true he had done his best to curl his small moustache in military fashion, while it was evident that he desired to impress upon his seniors the fact that he had been appointed by the King to command His Majesty's forces, not simply because of his Royal

blood, but because of his fitness. And yet it did seem strange to me that this stripling should be placed in command over men old enough to be his father. A little later, however, this impression passed away. There could be little doubt about it that, young as he was, he was a born leader, and that men instinctively obeyed him.

He darted a keen, searching glance at me as I entered, as if in doubt concerning both my quality and the side on which I fought. For, as my companions had often remarked, I had more the appearance of King's soldier than that of one of Cromwell's Company. Concerning this there was no wonder, for, as I had told Master Cromwell, I saw no reason why I should appear other than I was, or why I should cut my hair according to the fashion common among his men. I was the son of an English gentleman, and although I fought on the Parliamentary side, I still, like any other youth, desired to be fittingly attired according to my rank. Moreover, Cromwell, who, although a strict disciplinarian, and one who had great contempt for young swashbucklers who wished to rig themselves out in as many colours as grow on a peacock, made no demur to my request. Thus it was that, when I appeared before Prince Rupert, my clothes were as good as those of his own followers.

I say he darted a keen, searching glance at me, and I thought he was about to open his mouth to ask me questions, but instead he turned to the letter I had brought him, and having broken the seal, read it attentively. Presently I saw him raise his eyebrows like a man astonished, and then he turned another eager, questioning look towards me.

"Your name is Roderick Falkland?"

"Yes, your Highness."

"And you have come direct from General Cromwell?"

"Yes, your Highness."

He again examined the letter, and read it through, whereupon he turned to those around him.

"We have one of Cromwell's spies, have we not?"

"Yes," replied Lord Newcastle. "Never were men so much duped as by this fellow. He came as——"

"Yes, I remember the circumstances very well," interrupted the young Prince. "The information he was able to pass on before we captured him led me to alter my plans. What has become of him?"

"He is closely guarded, and it was decided that he should be shot this morning."

"At what hour?"

"Faith, I have almost forgotten. I think about this hour. Perchance he is dead by this."

"If the fellow is not yet dead, let his punishment be delayed awhile," said the Prince. "Meanwhile, do you find out, and let me know forthwith."

Some one immediately left the tent while the young Prince turned to me.

"You served under my Lord Strafford?"

"Yes, your Highness."

"And disobeyed the King's commands?"

Again I assented.

"Since then you have been fighting against us?"

"Yes, your Highness."

He turned on me a keen, angry glance, and spoke like one in a passion.

"I have heard of you, Master Falkland," he cried. "You whose father hath fought so bravely in the West, you whose brothers are still fighting for the King,

you who are not only a rebel but a traitor, have dared to come hither to me!"

"As to that, I take it that the letter I have brought explains why," I replied boldly, for now that he had taken this turn with me I felt no fear of him, neither did I expect favour.

"What think you of this, my lords?" he said with a laugh, and he passed the letter to Lord Newcastle.

There could be no doubt of it that when they had read the letter they regarded me with new interest.

"What say you?" said Prince Rupert presently. "Shall we set this young spy at liberty, and take this young fighting-cock in his place?"

"The exchange will be a good one," replied Lord Newcastle. "I would wager ten of Queen Elizabeth's golden eagles, to a farthing, that this Wilson would never spy on us again, while this young springald hath in the past been very troublesome."

"But it was decided that Wilson was to be shot," remarked Sir William Langdale. "Will you shoot this young Falkland?"

"And why not?" said another, whose name I did not know. "He hath offered to take his place. He hath come with a letter from Cromwell to that effect, and he well meriteth his fate. According to his own account he hath, after being under my Lord Strafford, and after having disobeyed the King's will, become a traitor, and hath enlisted on the side of the enemy."

At this there was general assent. Nevertheless, I saw that the thing pleased not Prince Rupert, for he leapt to his feet like a man much moved.

"No, by heavens, no, gentlemen," he cried. "At least, not yet. Die he shall if he doth not repent, but not like that. I love a brave man, even although he

may be a mistaken one, and even although he may have turned rebel. Yet the thing he hath done is a brave thing. Read again what Cromwell hath said."

"Ay, the thing is well enough, your Highness; even although it seems rather the action of a fool than of a sane man. Nevertheless, if he offers himself to take the place of another man, and Cromwell hath accepted his offer, there seems no reason for our refusal."

"Ay, but think of it, my lords." And for a moment I thought Prince Rupert had forgotten my presence. "It is a noble thing to do, and worthy of a man of blood, even although he be a rebel. Faith, it is a thing I would like to have done myself. He hath offered himself to save the son of a poor widow—ay, and hath done it in a brave way. That is the kind of deed that I love, be a man loyal or be he a rebel. Such a man should, if he died, die fighting, and not as a spy."

"Then refuse to accept him."

"That is another matter," replied Prince Rupert, "for he hath wrought us serious harm. It is no secret that the fellow did much to make us lose Gainsborough, and as such cannot be dismissed lightly. But as to shooting him, I must think twice first."

"But what of Wilson?" asked some one.

At the moment a messenger entered to say that the farmer-boy was not dead, but that it was doubtful if he would recover from the wounds he had received when he was captured.

At this there was silence for a moment, which was broken by Lord Newcastle, urging that it was

the rule of the army that a spy should be shot without mercy.

"I command the army," said Prince Rupert haughtily, "and am subject only to His Majesty." Hereupon he hesitated a second, as though he were in doubt as to how he should make up his mind. A minute later his eyes shone with the light of resolve.

"Let the fellow Wilson go," he said. "If he dieth of his wounds, that hath nothing to do with me. As for Master Falkland, let him be guarded safely until I have made up my mind concerning him."

At this he seized a pen and wrote rapidly, and then, having signed his name, he turned to one of his officers.

"See that this is executed at once, Colonel Windale," he said. "As to you, Master Roderick Falkland, I will see you again."

"You have not given orders concerning the manner in which Master Falkland is to be treated," said Colonel Windale.

"As we would treat any gentleman who hath been taken prisoner," replied Prince Rupert, and I judged from the tone of his voice that he was angry at the way the others regarded his treatment.

As for me, I was marched away like a man to imprisonment, and presently, when I found myself alone, it seemed that all I had passed through was like a dream from which I should presently awake.

CHAPTER XXI

MY IMPRISONMENT AT PONTEFRACT, IN THE COUNTY OF YORKSHIRE

For three days I was left alone in my imprisonment. No man visited me save to bring me my food, and no one spoke a kind word. I heard that Johnnie Wilson had been given his liberty, but that his wounds were so bad that it was very doubtful whether he would reach Cromwell's camp. It seemed, therefore, as though what I had done would be in vain, and that I had become a prisoner without aught good resulting. Nay, it might be that I should be shot as Rupert's officers wished, in which case the sacrifice of my life would be but a fool's sacrifice. Still, I had made my bed, and I must perforce lie on it without murmuring, hard as this became. For now that I had time to realise all that had taken place, the thought of death became harder and harder to bear. All my old love for life and active service came back to me, and when presently I heard that preparations were being made for a great battle, I fretted mightily at the thought of being mewed up in prison, instead of striking a blow for the cause which had become so dear to me.

At the end of the third day, after my breakfast had been brought to me, two soldiers bade me follow them. Wondering what was their purpose in doing

this, I obeyed their command, and a few minutes later found myself alone with Prince Rupert, the commander of the King's forces. And here let me say that never did I realise until this moment what a noble bearing he had, or how, had it been possible, I should have delighted in serving under him. Even before he spoke a word I caught myself comparing him with Oliver Cromwell, the Puritan general, and I had to confess that the young Prince appealed far more to my youthful imagination than did the stern, plain country squire. For he was the embodiment of youthful daring, of chivalry, and of all my early thoughts of a soldier. There was laughter in his eye, laughter on his lips, and he possessed such a winning manner that I found it hard to resist him. Moreover, I saw the moment I entered that he regarded me kindly. He looked at me neither sternly nor coldly, but just as one young man might look at another who had been found guilty of some boyish escapade.

"Ah, Master Falkland," he cried in an eager, boyish way, "I meant to have seen you before, but I have had many matters to attend to. Still, I gave orders that you should be kindly treated."

"I have been kindly treated, your Highness," I replied.

"I have made inquiries about you, Master Falkland," he said, "and am disposed to be lenient. Neither do I wonder at your kicking against the commands of Lord Strafford and the little Archbishop. I'faith, had I been in His Majesty's counsel at the time I should have opposed their plan of sending to the Pope for help. I say it frankly, it was bad policy, and must be against the grain of every true Englishman to seek for such aid."

I marvelled at the way he spoke, but I learnt afterwards that he was noted for his unwary speech. It was true he was very young, and therefore it could not be expected that he should be wise and reserved like older men.

"But that is over now," he went on. "The battle will be fought by loyal Englishmen and none other. That being so your scruples must surely be removed, Master Falkland."

At this I was silent, for I knew not what was in his mind.

"This rebellion can last but little longer," he continued presently. "Within two months from now the rebels will be driven before us like thistledown before a strong wind."

Still I continued silent, first because I did not believe in his words, and second because there seemed naught to reply.

"Therefore I would have you, a brave man, Master Falkland, mistaken as you have been, share in the glorious victory we shall win. Faith, man, you cannot fight again with the rebels, and no wonder. You are a man of family, and your father is faithful to the King. No wonder you offered to take Wilson's place. How could you, the son of Sir John Falkland, continue to fight against His Majesty's soldiers? No wonder, therefore, that you sought to atone for your—your—shall we call it mistake, by giving yourself up as you did! Well, I am young like you, and I love a brave man. So then I am going to make you an offer, Master Falkland. You will renounce your allegiance to the Parliamentary army and you shall fight under me."

"What!" I cried, aghast.

"Ah, I surprise you! Doubtless Lord Newcastle will be vexed and surprised, but as I say, I love a brave man. Such as you cannot continue to fight against the King. Why, what would you! Suppose the rebels were victorious—then the King would no longer be King! Think of it! His Majesty, subject to the will of Parliament! Why, the people, when they come to their senses, would never allow it. They would never submit to the son of my grandfather, James I., so far forgetting his royalty. Besides, we must be victorious—we will quell this rebellion, and then we will for ever close the mouths of these psalm-singing hypocrites."

His eyes flashed as he spoke, and he started to his feet like a man angry; then I saw that he was altogether blind to the things for which such men as Cromwell were fighting. I saw, moreover, that he was completely carried away by his own fancies, and he went on speaking to me, not as though I were a prisoner, but to one of his own officers.

"Fancy!" he cried. "To what would these men drag our country? We should have common fellows commanding our army instead of gentlemen; we should have the will of the people overruling the will of the Royalty; we should have all sorts of hot gospellers claiming equality with those who are appointed by the King's will to decide upon religious matters. You have doubtless seen this, Master Falkland, and as a consequence could no longer fight with them. Well, I have determined to act clemently. You shall have another chance to uphold the Royalty, and you shall again take your place among King Charles's merry men."

He did not seem to think of my refusal, and this

made it all the harder for me to tell him what was in my heart. Yet I did it, and I trust becomingly; for, as I have said, he charmed me by his freedom of speech and lightness of heart.

"God's mercy, man, but you cannot mean that!" he cried.

"Yes, your Highness," I replied, "I do mean it."

"Then you must die," he said sternly.

At this my heart became like lead, yet did I utter no sound.

"Think again," he cried. "I do not often give so much grace. Think again."

"I thought long and much before I made my choice," I replied.

He did not bestow even so much as another look on me, but instead rang a bell which stood on the table.

"Take this fellow to Pontefract," he said sharply. "I myself will send orders to Colonel Lowther concerning him."

"He is to be lodged in the Castle, your Highness?"

"Yes. Take him away immediately."

And without more ado I was marched away, and after a long journey I presently found myself imprisoned in the great Castle at Pontefract. Now it was a wonder to me then, even as it is now, that I was not despatched forthwith, even as Prince Rupert's officers desired, but I imagined that the young general desired to maintain his authority before his officers, and having once declared that he would not have me dealt with as they had advised, he determined to send me to Pontefract, where many of the Parliamentary prisoners were kept.

Concerning the time I was at Pontefract I kept no count, for after the first few days there seemed

no reason for doing so. One day was very nearly the same as another, and naught happened whereby we could mark off the length of our imprisonment. I was not kept in solitary confinement, but was allowed to mingle freely with the rest of the prisoners. This, although not so terrible as my experiences after my refusal to go to Italy, was yet hard to bear, for we were herded like a flock of sheep, and as the summer days came on, the heat and foulness of the air caused much sickness amongst us. Moreover, there seemed no possibility of escape, for the castle was regarded as a stronghold of the Royalist party, and unless it were taken by the Parliamentary army, it seemed as though we might have to remain there until the end of the war. It was true we heard rumours that General Fairfax was surrounding it, but concerning this we had no assurance, so that we had nothing to look forward to save many months of weary imprisonment.

I will not weary those who read this by describing how we tried to pass our days, for, first of all, it has but little to do with the main trend of my story, and second, it is not pleasant to think of even now.

It must be, as near as I can make out, two months after I was imprisoned at Pontefract, that one day I thought I saw in the eyes of one of my gaolers a meaning look as he turned towards me.

I accordingly made my way towards him, but in such a way that no man suspected my intent, for I had not been in prison two days without seeing that there was much jealousy and anger among the prisoners, so much so that one man was constantly suspecting another of secret designs, even although there seemed no reason for it. As I said, therefore, I

made my way towards the gaoler, not as though I meant to go to him, but as though I had another thought in my mind. As I drew near to him I saw him turn his head away from me; nevertheless, I noticed that he held a bit of crumpled paper in his right hand. At this my heart beat quickly, for I could not help believing that the man had a meaning in it all, especially when he said something which caused the men to look away from him. It was then that he held out his right hand somewhat, and I, as anxious as he that no man should see aught, turned my back towards him, placing at the same time my left hand behind me.

A moment later I felt a bit of paper, which I held tightly, and without making the least sign to the man I again mingled with my companions. This done, I again turned towards him to see whether I had done what he desired, but I noticed that he paid no further heed to me, so I concluded that he regarded his business with me as finished.

It was some time before I was able to find enough solitude to read the paper, which I had carefully secreted, but I at length managed it, and this is what I read:

"*It is believed in high places that a certain prisoner hath received information concerning the farmer's prayers. He will therefore be taken to him who rules. On his way thither he will pass the town pump.*"

That was all. Not a name was mentioned, and no place suggested save the town pump. Where the town pump might be I knew no more than the man in the moon. Everything, therefore, was a mystery to me. Nevertheless, as may be imagined, I thought

much concerning the message I had received, and ere long I had spelt out a hundred meanings. For this was certain—the paper would not be given to me for nothing. He who gave it to the gaoler must have had some interest in me, else why should I be selected? I therefore tried to work it out in the following way: first, who wrote it? second, what was the purpose in sending it to me? Presently it seemed to me that everything was answered by answering the first question, for if I knew who took enough interest in me to send me the letter, I should quickly discover what was behind it all. Now this narrowed down the field of inquiry very much, for it quickly came to me that only two or three men who were friendly disposed towards me would know what had become of me. These were General Oliver Cromwell, his son Oliver, and possibly the boy Johnnie Wilson, whose place I had taken. Then the question came, which of these would be likely to take steps to serve me? I quickly dismissed the thought of General Cromwell, for he was not the man to send me to take the place of another man, and then to use secret means concerning me. He was a man who struck boldly and in the open; moreover, he would by this time have forgotten all about me, seeing his mind was so full of great projects. As for Johnnie Wilson, if he was wounded so sorely that he was scarce likely to live, he could not take steps to help me. Besides, the letter did not strike me as being the work of a young farmer. There remained therefore only young Oliver Cromwell, and upon him my mind fastened. Had I been aware then of what I afterwards discovered, I should have known that he had not sent it, for young Oliver at that time lay dead of the wounds

he had received almost immediately after I had set out to take the place of Johnnie Wilson.* But of that I knew nothing, and I assured myself that it was young Oliver and no other who had done this thing.

Having settled this matter, I quickly made up my mind concerning everything else. The "certain prisoner" was myself, the "farmer's prayers" were the plans of the Puritan general, and young Oliver had by some means conveyed to Colonel Lowther the idea that I had received news concerning them. This being so the Colonel would desire to see me, and would give commands that I should be brought before him. So far all was plain. But what was meant by the information that on my way to him I should pass the town pump? There could be only one meaning. It meant that he had arranged for some of his men to be there to help me, and that I must be ready, at some signal which would be made known to me, to fight for my liberty and escape.

I say that this was the way, after much vain thinking, I spelt out the meaning of the letter I had received. But then rose another difficulty. By what means did young Oliver induce the gaoler to give me the letter? Doubtless, however, the man could be easily bribed, especially as there would seem to be little danger in giving me such an innocent missive.

I had therefore nothing to do but to wait, and this I did very impatiently, for after many weeks of imprisonment I longed more than words can say for activity and freedom. After some hours had passed away, and nothing having happened, I began to feel that some one had been fooling me, for I reflected

* There seems some doubt about this, as some historians assert that young Oliver died of small-pox, away from the scenes of the war.—J. H.

that if it were believed in high places that I knew aught of Cromwell's plans I should be called thither without delay. And this, as may be imagined, became hard to bear, especially as I saw the light of day dying away.

Presently, however, and it must have been far past sundown, my heart gave a great jump at hearing my own name. I started, and saw in the dim light of a flickering candle two soldiers standing near me.

"You will come with us," they said.

At this I pretended to be much surprised at seeing them, and asked them what they wished of me; but they gave me no answer, save to place themselves one each side of me.

A few minutes later I was in the street, and if ever a man felt thankful for a free breath from heaven it was I, for the place wherein I was imprisoned was a foul place, and not fit for a Christian man to live in. Although the night was warm, a shiver passed through me, so different was the air from that which I had been breathing.

I noticed that the street was very quiet; not a soul was stirring, so that as I passed along, one huge soldier holding my right arm, and another my left, no one was there to take heed of me, or to pass remarks on the ragged condition of my clothes, or on my unkempt appearance. No moon shone in the sky, yet was the night far from dark; indeed, so clear was it that I was able to see everything with ease. I looked around eagerly, but nothing of importance could I see. On each side of me were shops, evidently closed for the night, for they were all dark, and many of them shuttered closely. When we passed a side street I eagerly examined it, hoping

I should see some friendly face, or hear some friendly voice, but no man appeared. Once or twice I heard the sound of voices, but they evidently came from the upper chambers of the houses, where here and there I saw a light shining.

Neither of the soldiers spoke. Each kept his eyes straight forward, as though they were commanded to take no notice of what might be passing; and although I spoke to them several times, no reply did they vouchsafe.

In this way we walked together, it may have been for well-nigh five minutes, when I felt a shiver pass through my body, for I saw that the street in which we walked broadened into an open space, in the middle of which I saw a dark-looking object standing out clear and distinct.

"The town pump," I said to myself, and then I realised that if aught was to happen it must happen quickly. I cast my eyes quickly around, but the place was silent as death, whereupon I concluded that the hour was later than I had thought, for nearly the whole town seemed asleep. I may have been mistaken, but it seemed to me that each of the soldiers took a firmer grip of my arm as we entered the open space, and then I felt how useless it would be for me to seek to escape from them. For either one of them would have been a match for me, especially as I had been weakened by my long imprisonment; moreover, they were armed, while I had no weapon, not even so much as a pocket-knife.

Still, as I again looked around and saw no helper near, I felt as though I must do something.

"I am very thirsty," I said. "Could you not give me something to drink?"

But neither of them replied.

"I cannot go farther," I went on; "my throat is parched, and my head is swimming. I am going to faint. Give me water, just a drop of water!"

And in this I spoke the truth, for if ever a man felt well-nigh dead for want of a drink it was I.

"Howd thee noise," said one of the soldiers, "and gie us no trouble, or it'll be wuss for thee. I tell thee there's nowt to drink 'ere."

"Ay, but I'm fainting," I said; "and is not that a pump there?"

Whereupon I leaned heavily on the man on my left side, as though I were on the point of falling.

"Water," I gasped, "only a drop!" And then I should have fallen had they not supported me.

"The chap's fair gone off in a swound for sure," said one; "and no wonder, for it wur a foul hoil he wur in."

"Thou know'st th' orders we 'ad," replied the other.

"Ay, but th' lad's a deein for a drap o' watther, and be he on th' one side or th' other, no Christian man should dee for a soop o' watther. Besides, 'ere's th' pump all handy."

"Weel, but——"

"I tell thee, ther's noan 'arm in gien the lad a soop o' drink. There, I'll howd him, and thee jist git some watther in th' bucket."

At this moment I thought I heard the sound of footsteps close by, but I was not sure.

"Do as I tell tha," persisted the kind-hearted Yorkshireman at my side. "Thou'lt be noan sarvin' the King ony the worse by gien th' enemy a soop o' drink. Besides, where's the danger? If I were

to whustle there'd be twenty sodgers 'ere in a minute."

At this moment the more cautious man turned to the pump, while I lay like one fainting on the shoulder of the burly Yorkshireman; nevertheless, I kept my eyes well open.

A moment later I heard a dull thud, as though a blow had been struck close by me, while I felt the man by my side stagger.

CHAPTER XXII

TELLS OF MY ESCAPE FROM PONTEFRACT

As may be imagined, I instantly forgot all my thirst and my faintness, and with the quickness of lightning I wrenched myself free. Near me were two forms, each of which was enveloped in a long cloak. How they had come hither I knew not, for the place was large, and not a sight of them was visible a moment before. The man by my side made no resistance, but fell to the ground like one stunned, but the other, hearing a noise, turned savagely towards me.

"What is this?" he cried with a savage oath, making a leap towards me.

I met him fairly with a blow between the eyes, but it must either have been weak or ill-planted, for he did not fall. Instead, he gripped me with a grip of iron.

"Bill," he shouted, "geet up, mon."

But the other lay like a man dead.

"Blow thee whustle," he said hoarsely; for by this time I had him by the throat, and was fighting hard for the mastery. He was stronger than I; in truth, I felt that my sinews had become as soft as pulp, and that although I struggled mightily I could not hold out long.

"Blow thee whustle, Bill," I heard him gurgle.

"Help, help!" And then, as if by magic, he became as limp as a piece of wet cloth.

My head was all of a whirl, while the houses all around me seemed to be on the move.

"Follow," said a voice near, "follow quickly; your life depends on it."

The voice seemed husky and strange.

"I cannot," I replied, "my head is whirling." And then I fell to the ground.

A minute later I started up with a cry. A quantity of water had been thrown in my face, and although it gave me a kind of shock, it made me something of my own man again.

"Drink this," said a voice; and a moment later I found myself drinking a warm and generous liquid.

By this time one of the soldiers, I know not which, was rising to his feet.

"Help, help!" he cried in a dazed sort of way.

"Follow, follow!" said a voice. "Your life depends on it."

Scarcely knowing what I was doing, I followed the two dark forms which had appeared so mysteriously; but I had scarcely passed through the market-place when I heard the screech of a whistle.

"Faster, faster!" said the voice; and then my companions started to run, while I, my legs trembling with weakness, still followed. We ran for well-nigh five minutes, and then my companions stopped suddenly.

"Master Falkland!"

"Yes."

"Do you not know me?"

"Mistress Rachel Marlow! Is it you who have done all this?"

"What I have done is nothing; listen, we have to

pass the sentinel and we must pass him quickly, or the soldiers will soon be upon us. Hark! do you hear the whistle?"

"Yes; what do you wish me to do?"

"Are you strong enough to fight? Not only your liberty and perhaps your life, but also mine, and my—my sister's are in danger."

"Your sister's?"

"Ay! Here is a sword. If we can pass this sentinel we shall be safe."

Perhaps the surprise of knowing who my deliverer was heartened me—anyhow, my weakness left me. My nerve came back to my arms, and, feeling the sword-hilt in my hand, I felt my own man.

The sound of distant voices reached me, and I realised that my escape had become known. There were many questions which came into my mind, but that was not the time to ask them. It was not only I who was in danger, but this Puritan maid who had risked everything to save me.

"You know the way, Mistress Rachel?"

"Yes."

"Then lead onward."

"You are strong enough to fight?" And I thought her voice trembled.

"Yes; do not fear for me."

Her companion spoke not a word, but stood by, evidently trusting Mistress Rachel to do everything.

Again we all darted forward, I holding a naked sword in my hand. We had not gone far when we came to a gateway.

"Here is our danger," said Mistress Rachel Marlow; "this is the town-gate, and the house is full of soldiers."

'But there must be some other way."

"There is none. Every road and outlet to the town is guarded. There is only one man keeping guard."

"But you say the house is full of soldiers," I whispered. "If he makes a sound he will arouse them."

"He must not make a sound. Perhaps there will be no need for us to do anything."

"But the gate will be locked."

"I hope not. I pray not."

My head was so confused with all I had passed through that I could not understand what she meant. Still, one thing was clear enough. If the man at the gate opposed us, I must make short work of him before he could arouse the soldiers.

The sound of voices in the distance became louder; there could be no doubt about it, no time was to be lost.

We came close up to the gate. In the dim light I saw a man with a musket in his hands leaning against the wall of the house. As far as I could judge in the dim light he seemed asleep.

Mistress Rachel went eagerly to the fastening of the gate. It was locked.

"We are lost!" she said; "it is covered with iron spikes so that we cannot climb over."

At this I laughed; why, I could hardly tell. But now that some of my strength had come back to me I felt light-hearted. Besides, I never felt fear when in the presence of danger; it was when it was in the distance that danger made me tremble. The sentinel continued to lean against the wall, breathing heavily like a man in a deep sleep.

I caught her under the arms. "Now," I whispered laughingly, "prepare to leap."

A minute later, with my aid, she had leapt over the barrier with as much ease as a bird might fly.

"Now," I said to her companion, who had remained silent, "let me help you over in the same way."

It was evident that this maid had neither the strength nor the nerve of Mistress Rachel, for she trembled like a leaf. It seemed to me that she was well-nigh overcome, for not only did she shake with fear, but she sobbed violently. Nevertheless, she came to me without a word, and although I got her over with far greater difficulty than had been the case with the other, yet I did manage it. Even then I could not help minding me of the times I had helped Rosiland in this way. Ay, and I remembered that it cost me no trouble at all, for such a leap would she give when I gave the signal that she seemed to scarce need my help. But this maid, whom Mistress Rachel called her sister, seemed heavy and lumpish, so that I had to well-nigh lift her over the barrier, which stood more than breast high.

I had scarcely done this when the sentinel awoke.

"Who's there?" he said sleepily, and rubbing his eyes.

There was no help for it, for the sound of voices was coming nearer, so before he could speak another word I struck him a heavy blow, and he fell with a thud. But now the hardest part of my task was come. It was comparatively easy to help two maidens to spring over the barrier, but to climb over it myself was different, for, as Mistress Rachel had said, it was covered with sharp iron spikes, so that nowhere could I find foothold. Moreover, I began to have doubts about the future. Even although I got over, how could I escape those who were following,

especially with two women? It is true we might get into the fields and thus escape for a time in the darkness of night, but the whole countryside would be aroused and search made everywhere. Still, I had not come thus far to give up without striving to the very last, so putting my sword between my teeth (I had dropped it while aiding the women), I prepared to leap the gate.

As a boy it had been one of my pastimes to practise leaping gates. My brothers and I used to take a short run, place our hands on the topmost bar, and vault over. But things were different in those days. Then I was in the heyday of strength and agility, while now my limbs were weakened and stiffened by many weeks of inactivity in an ill-smelling prison. Then, moreover, I could see to place my hands on the bar, and thus have myself at advantage.

Carefully did I try and find a spot where I might get a holding-place, but none could I find.

"Quickly! quickly!"

It was Mistress Rachel Marlow's voice I heard, and the fact that she cared so much for my escape heartened me; yet could I not do as she bid me, for it seemed to me as though my sinews had grown soft again, and my head became dizzy.

"Quick, quick, or you are lost!"

She spoke the truth, for now the sound of following footsteps was close upon me, while the sentinel began to rise to his feet.

I suppose there are times in a man's life when a kind of superhuman strength comes to him, for it seemed to me for a moment my muscles became like steel. The sharp spikes on the gate cut into my hands, yet did I scarcely feel them as, by a superhuman

effort, I lifted myself up, and presently set one foot on the top. I was not a moment too soon, for a dozen men came up as I fell helplessly on the other side, my sword, which I had held in my teeth, falling from me, and clattering noisily on the hard, stony road.

"Stop i' th' King's name!"

"Quick, quick! we are safe now."

But this did not seem to me so sure. It is true our pursuers had no horses, but they would easily be able to open the gates, and then our capture seemed imminent. For not only was I not able to run with any speed, but the women would soon be at the mercy of the King's soldiers.

Still, I picked up my sword and held it firmly in my right hand, and followed the women, who were now a dozen or more yards away. I saw them leave the road and turn into a narrow lane, whither I quickly followed them. I think I ran quickly, weak and exhausted as I was, yet could I not overtake them. Presently they turned into a field, where to my joy I saw three horses. In less time than it takes me to tell we had unfastened them, and I was just on the point of mounting one of them, the women by this time being on horseback, when our pursuers came up.

"Stop i' th' King's name!" cried a voice.

A bullet whizzed close by me, but I was not touched; and still another, but that also spent itself harmlessly in the air.

I had barely settled myself on the horse's back when a man, all panting and nearly out of breath, grasped my foot.

"Stop, I tell thee!" he gasped.

"I HAD BARELY SETTLED MYSELF ON THE HORSE'S BACK, WHEN A MAN . . . GRASPED MY FOOT."

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He nearly pulled me from the horse, but I struck at him with my sword. With a moan he fell, but whether I killed him or not I did not know, neither do I know to this day, for the horse leaped forward and bore me safely from the King's soldiers.

For well-nigh a minute I galloped across the field, not knowing which way I went, for the sky had by this time become cloudy. Neither could I see the women, although I fancied I heard the sound of their horses.

A minute later I came up to them. Even then I saw that Mistress Rachel sat her horse firmly, but I thought her companion was ill at ease, as though she had difficulty in retaining her seat. I asked no questions, it was not the time to do that; but I could not help reflecting that this Puritan maid had planned and carried out my escape with all the courage and determination of a man, and as I judged with far more cunning. For I saw plainly that many things had to be planned in order to accomplish that which had come to pass. For first of all, she had to make Colonel Lowther believe that I had information concerning Cromwell's plans, and then had to discover the time he intended to bring me before him. Then again, she had to find means whereby the gaoler should give me the letter, in order to warn me of what was taking place. Added to this there was the scene near the town pump, which even yet I could find no explanation for, so miraculously had I got away from the King's soldiers, to say nothing of the fact that the sentinel at the gate of the town was fast asleep, as though he had drunk too much strong ale. All this, I say, as well as the waiting horses, told me not only of careful planning and resolute

purpose, but it told me of a courage that I little suspected women to possess, and of a care for my welfare which I thought no one had.

"God bless Mistress Rachel Marlow," I said in my heart, and the tears started to my eyes as I thought of the many anxious hours she must have spent, and of the hardships she had had to encounter.

But why should she do all this? Then I bethought me of our last meeting, when I had told her of my love for Rosiland, and of the way she had cast me off. I remembered how her face had become fiery red at one moment, and pale as death at another, and for the first time it came into my mind that even although Rosiland despised me, this Puritan maid cared for me more than ever sister cared for brother. And yet the thought gave me no joy, for I loved her not, save as any man might love a woman who had rendered him a service. My heart beat warm with gratitude, and an affection that was brotherly, but with nothing more. Nay, at one time I felt almost angry with her. Why, I asked myself with strange ingratitude, should she do all this, while the woman for whom I would have given my life scorned me and despised me? Even when she had visited me in Launceston Castle, at my mother's behest, she had made me feel that she loathed my presence. And when at length I had crept into my old home like a thief in the night, she had not come near me, neither had she shown either by word or sign that I was more to her than a gipsy vagrant.

"Where did Mistress Rachel get these horses?" I thought, as presently we sped across a piece of open downs, and then struck into the main road. "It must have cost money to obtain them, and it must have

been by clever strategy that she brought them to Pontefract."

But no answer did I get to these things, not even when presently I fell to asking her questions.

"Let us go forward, Master Falkland," she replied; "neither thank me for what hath been done. Rather thank God for delivering you."

"But whither go we, Mistress Rachel?"

"That will soon be made known to you."

"We be riding northward, I take it?"

But to this she gave no answer.

"How did you manage to plan my escape so cleverly, Mistress Rachel?"

"There were many friends who helped me."

"You did not tell me you had a sister."

"She hath but lately come back to father's house. I told you that at the time of my mother's death our household was broken up."

"And is your sister's name 'Leah,' Mistress Rachel?" I said, as pleasantly as I could.

"No, her name is 'Faith,'" she replied, "and she is worthy of her name, for she hath suffered much in order to help those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake."

Meanwhile we were riding along the road at a fair speed, I at Mistress Rachel's left hand, and her sister on her right hand.

"I owe my liberty and perhaps my life to you both," I said. "Some time I trust I may be able to repay you."

I know I spoke coldly, and yet somehow the words that were in my heart refused to be uttered. Besides, I felt that she was reserved and cold towards me. It is true she had risked her life to save mine, yet would

she not tell me by what means she had been able to deliver me.

Presently I saw many twinkling lights in the distance.

"That might be York," I said.

"It is not York."

"What then?"

"It is the army."

"The army! What army?"

"It is the Lord's army."

A few minutes later two men started up in the road, and stopped us.

"Who are you, and whither go you?"

The women spoke some words to them, whereupon one of them came to my horse's head, while the other spoke to Mistress Rachel.

"I have commands to take you straight to your father," he said; "Master Marlow hath been up all night praying for you both."

"Do we part here, then?" I said.

"Yes, I am ordered to take you direct to General Cromwell," replied the man who stood by my horse's head.

I tried again to utter my thanks, but again my words refused to come. She had given me my liberty, and yet I stood like one moonstruck in her presence.

"God will surely reward you," I said at length.

"I seek no reward," she replied. "Enough that you have been delivered from the hands of the enemy, and that you can again fight the battles of the Lord."

"But this is the third time you have served me, Mistress Rachel. I trust when the wars are over I

may be able to show you how great is my gratitude. I would also thank your sister for what she has done."

Upon this I went straight to her side. "Mistress Faith," I said, "we be strangers, yet have you served me as though I were a brother."

I could not see her face, for it was hidden by the headgear she wore. Moreover, the light of morning was not yet come, but I thought she looked pale and distraught.

"It is all because of Rachel," was the reply she gave me. "May God preserve you."

She spoke in a low, husky voice, yet did her words sound plain in my ears. And this was all she said, for at that moment they turned towards the place where her father was.

As for me, I was again conducted to General Oliver Cromwell; but I did not know then that we were well-nigh on the eve of the greatest battle that had yet been fought in the history of the war. Yet so it was, for while I had been escaping from Pontefract, Prince Rupert was camped at York, preparing for a great attack, while the Parliamentary army was on Marston Moor, whither I had been so strangely brought.

"The day of the Lord draweth nigh," said the man who led me to Cromwell's tent, "and the man of God is praying for victory. Come, he desireth to see you."

"But surely he will not see me at this hour?" I said.

"I think he never sleepeth," said the soldier, "for the zeal of the Lord's cause hath eaten him up. His command was that the moment you were brought hither you must appear in his presence."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE EVE OF THE GREAT FIGHT AT MARSTON MOOR

I MUST make confession here that as I went towards Cromwell's tent I seemed like a man in a dream. All the scenes through which I had passed that night were as vague and as shadowy as a cloud that flits across a summer sky. Moreover, my imprisonment at Pontefract seemed a thing of the far back past. The strange letter which the gaoler had given to me, and the subsequent journey through the silent streets of the old town, came to me as a far-off memory. And yet the events were real enough. I was there in the midst of Cromwell's soldiers, a free man, with the dome of God's great sky above me. The pure sweet air of heaven was all around me, while away in the eastern sky I saw the first rosy blush of dawn. The sound of the women's voices was still in my ears. The race for life, the struggle for liberty might seem a long distance away, but they had taken place.

Still, everything was mysterious. Neither of the women had seemed desirous of speaking with me, while Rachel's manner was cold and formal, altogether different from that when we had met before. She would answer none of my questions; she would not tell me how she had brought about my deliverance. I tried to understand all this, but in vain. How did

she obtain horses? How did she hold communication with Colonel Lowther? How did she find means of sending me a letter? I knew not. All I knew was that I was there a free man, and that I owed my deliverance to two women.

The morning was wondrously still, I remember. All around me, as I afterwards discovered, was a mighty multitude of men; but the great wide countryside might only be peopled by the dead for all the noise they made. Even the man at my side spoke only in low whispers, as though he felt the awesome silence, and was afraid that the sound of his own voice might disturb it. I felt glad he did not speak aloud, for I felt, as I had never felt before, the presence of God, while even in the great hush I heard His voice.

Sometimes the wind blew gently, but mostly the air was windless. When it blew, however, I heard music in the moor grass. The man who has not heard the winds of God in the silence of dawn, among the great trackless lands, hath missed much. Much as I wanted to be in the presence of Cromwell, I stood still and listened. We had been walking across a tract of land which was uncultivated, and the ground was covered by a kind of grass only to be found in such places. Thin and hard it was, so hard that even the cattle cared not to eat it. Neither is it pleasant to look on in the light of the sun, for it is grey and bleached. But God had use for it that night, for as the wind swept across it a music arose so sweet and holy that I looked around that I might see the angels. Many times during the time I had been imprisoned in Pontefract I doubted whether God cared for me; I even doubted His existence; but

there, on the wide moors, beneath the all-beholding sky, I doubted not, for I knew that God was there speaking in the silence.

Since that time I have thought of those same moors as I saw them afterwards. Then they were not silent and serene, but the scene of one of the bloodiest battles ever fought. Then the air resounded with the noise of cannon and musketry. The music of the wind among the grass was drowned by the battle-cries of men drunk with blood; the silence of God was broken by the moans of the wounded and dying. And yet, was not the roar of guns, the clash of swords, and the shout of warriors also the voice of God? Was not He purifying the people of England by the scourge of war? Was He not even then bringing down the mighty from their seats, and exalting the humble and meek? This I know: a great multitude in England felt that corruption and lies had been festering in the heart of our nation, and that it needed the fires of God to make it clean.

We walked on I know not how long, but it seemed to me that we went a long distance. Presently we were stopped and questioned. Again we walked on, and again we were stopped; but no man kept us long, for it seemed as though the General had especially commanded that I should be brought to him without delay.

"Hush!"

It was my companion who spoke, and I stopped to listen. Perhaps I ought not to have done this, but it seemed to me as though there was naught else to do. I felt I could not close my ears, and I dared not make a noise.

"The General is at prayer," said the man at my side. "We must not disturb him."

This is what I heard:

"Great God of battles, I humble myself before Thee. I have naught of which I can boast, for I am a man of sin, even as my fathers were. Yet Thou hast forgiven me for the sake of Thy dear Son. I am naught, and Thou art all, yet dost Thou deign to use even me. Ay, and by me hast Thou smitten Thine enemies, as Thou wilt again smite them. Cleanse Thou me from secret sins, O God of truth. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. God of battles, I feel that the day of Thine anger approacheth. Soon shall the battle of the warrior be heard with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood. But this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. Make bare Thine arm, O Lord of Hosts. Make Thine enemies bite the dust, even as in the days of Joshua and of Gideon. For they mock Thee, O Lord, even as they mock those who fight for Thee. But Thou art the Lord of Hosts. Ay, they rejoiced when my son was slain in battle, even although I wept bitter tears like David of olden time. But Thine ear is not heavy. Thou wilt scatter them, O Lord, for wickedness is in their dwellings, while their hearts be filled with corruption and lies. Therefore do I look to Thee. God of battles, give us the victory, and to Thy name shall be praise and glory. Amen."

All this I heard, and I have written it down that men may know what Oliver Cromwell was like when he talked with God. And truly if a man can be known, it is by his prayers. Men have said that Cromwell was self-seeking and cruel; but I, who have known him, tell what I have seen, so that all who read this may judge him fairly. That he was a self-seeking

man I deny, for he, even in the greatest of his victories, yearned with a great yearning to return to his home and his loved ones. He fought only because God had called him, and because necessity was laid upon him.

It was with trembling limbs that I went up to his tent, into which I was presently ushered.

As I entered I saw that he was clothed as if for battle. At his side his sword was girt, while on his boots great spurs were fastened.

"Young Roderick Falkland," he said, as I entered, "the Lord hath delivered thee!" And then for the first and only time in my life I saw Oliver Cromwell shed tears.

"My son, my boy Oliver, is dead!" he said.

At this I spoke no word, for my heart was full.

"He loved thee, young Roderick, and the Lord hath taken him away."

For a minute he was silent. He did not seem to think of my imprisonment, or of my escape; he only thought of me as a friend of his son.

"Oh, it hath cut me sore, but the Lord had need of him, and the Lord's will be done."

He walked up and down for well-nigh a minute, and then, as if by a great effort, he threw off the grief that oppressed him.

"Tell me all that hath happened to thee, since the day I saw thee last," he commanded.

I told him all as I have written it down here, while he sat silent, never speaking so much as a word.

"This is the Lord's doing," he said, when I had finished. "Roderick Falkland, it did grieve my heart sorely to allow thee to go and offer thyself in the stead of Widow Wilson's son. Yet I did it because I

believed it was the Lord's will, and in my heart of hearts I did believe that He would preserve thee. Surely, too, the Lord did desire to try thee to see if thou wert worthy."

"But the escape?" I asked. "Will you be pleased to tell me by what means Mistress Rachel Marlow did encompass that?"

At this question Oliver Cromwell smiled, and it revealed the man in a new light, for never before had I seen him smile.

"The task was easier than it seemed," he replied presently, "for Prince Rupert hath commanded every available soldier to York. Therefore is the town but ill guarded."

"Still," I urged, "the task was——"

"Difficult; ay, that it was, but neither you nor I, Roderick Falkland, can measure a woman's wit."

"But did you know of all this?" I stammered.

"I know everything, Roderick Falkland; but as to telling thee more, I will not. The Lord hath used the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, and that is enough for thee to know. Besides, it hath been borne upon me that should thy escape be brought about, the Lord would use thee in the great day which is surely coming. The armies of the enemy are gathered, and they may attack us right soon; but we be ready. And I have arranged that you do have command of a small company of men, and it is for this that I commanded your presence the moment you should be free."

For an hour after this he talked to me of the great battle which he said was drawing on apace, and of the duties which I was to undertake. I had a lieutenant's commission given me, and before that

day was over I was brought face to face with my men.

For two days we waited, doing little but to draw, step by step, nearer the village of Marston, during which time I felt that all my strength had come back to me.

Of Rachel Marlow and her sister I heard nothing; neither, for that matter, did I see anything of Master Andrew Marlow, although I heard that he was with the army, expounding to many the word of God.

On the first day of July, the word went through all our ranks that on the next day Prince Rupert would march out upon us from York with a great host of men. Some had it that he had thirty thousand men to give us battle, while others said that there were not nearly so many, but none doubted that a great host, led by the most daring commander in the King's army, would be upon us. Of the other parts of the Parliamentary army I know nothing. General Fairfax and Colonel Lambert were a good distance away, and even of General Baillie, who was quite near, I saw nothing prior to the great fight, for I was much engaged with my own duties, and sought to be worthy of the command Cromwell had given me.

I shall never forget the night of the first day of July in the year 1644. The day had passed away without aught happening, but we knew that the roar of battle would soon be in our ears. In truth, Prince Rupert had by some means taken a prisoner that day, and inquired of him concerning the Parliamentary army.

"Is Cromwell there?" asked the Prince.

"Ay, he is there," replied the soldier; "he commandeth the left wing of the army."

"And will he fight?"

"Ay, that he will," replied the man.

"Then he shall have fighting enough before to-morrow is over," said the Prince, with a laugh.

When the news of this meeting was brought to Cromwell, I stood near him. At first his eyes had a far-away look, as though he saw beyond the great towers of the minster at York, and I saw his lips move as if in prayer.

"Doth he say we shall have fighting enough?" said Cromwell quietly.

"Ay, that is what he saith."

"Then, if it please God, so shall he," was Cromwell's answer. But beyond that he spoke no word.

That night, as the sun went down, every man in Cromwell's Company gathered together as I had seen them near Peterborough, and as they did each night, no matter where they might be. As I looked into the men's faces I saw that they knew of the dark hour that was approaching. Many of them knew, even as I knew, that when the next night came they would not be there to answer to their names, but I saw no fear in their eyes. There could be no doubt about it, each man believed that God's eye was upon him, each man believed he was fighting God's cause.

There was a note of triumph in their voices as they sang their evening psalm, and each man had a look of stern resolution in his eyes. Away across the wide countryside we could hear the shouts of the soldiers, we could hear their laughter and their song, but Cromwell's men paid no heed to it. The scorn and ribaldry of others was naught to them. They stood in the presence of God, and were prepared to fight His battles. Much as I had been impressed by

them on that night near Peterborough, it was not the same as when we were gathered at Marston Moor. We were on the very eve of the battle, and before to-morrow's sun went down many would be standing before the throne of God.

So it was that their psalm had a special meaning, and as their harsh voices rose and fell I think that even the most ribald soldier must have been awed.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

I did not join in the singing; nevertheless, the spirit of Cromwell's soldiers got hold of me. That iron determination which expressed itself in their eyes, and in their unmusical voices, was communicated to me in spite of myself. I found myself gloating over the words,

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

For the time I believed as those men believed, and my hatred of tyranny became hatred of the tyrants. I fancied Rupert's soldiers preparing to march upon us in battle, and I heard the young Prince's laugh,

as Cromwell's name was mentioned. I felt, too, that it was no little thing we were fighting for, and I no more feared death than a lion fears defeat when he sees his prey.

For this I have found: war makes a man cruel in spite of himself. That is why I can understand some of those deeds of Cromwell. Every man in fighting tyranny is himself in danger of becoming a tyrant. The enemy which a man fights is no longer the symbol of wrong and oppression; he *is* that wrong and oppression. Even as Cromwell's Company sang that psalm I thought not of the suffering and misery which should be caused by the great battle; I recked nothing of widows' tears or orphans' wails; my mind and heart were filled only with a cruel longing to be in the midst of the fray and strike down in the name of the Lord.

When I had heard the man of God pray near Peterborough my heart did not go with his prayer for vengeance; but as he prayed that night before the battle of Marston Moor my heart said "Amen" to every word. Ay, my heart thrilled as he cried out, "*The Lord God is a man of war*"; and again as he prayed, "*Smite, O Lord, and spare not! Scatter them as a strong wind scatters chaff!*" I felt that the prayer would be answered, and that this was indeed the Lord's will.

Even now I cannot explain why this was so. Perchance I remembered the bitter oppression of past years, and doubtless I also remembered that, if the battle was not with us, every man who fought against the King would be put to torture and to death.

That night I laid me down to sleep in peace and quietness. I feared the coming battle no more than I

feared the rising of the summer's sun. Nay, rather I looked forward to the hour of battle as a time of gladness, and prayed that I might be instrumental in overcoming the enemies of the Lord.

The morning dawned clear and radiant. Few birds sang, because the place afforded scarce any trees where they might gather and pour forth their thanksgivings for the new-born day. But the bees hummed, and myriads of insects seemed to burst into life at the rising of the King of Day.

We looked eagerly towards York, but all was still. The great minster towers lifted their heads into the summer sky, as though the hearts of all beneath their shadow were filled with the message which the angels sang on the plains of Bethlehem during that night in which the Saviour was born.

Presently we heard the faint echo of bugles and trumpets, and as the light increased we thought we saw men looking towards us from the minster towers. But during the forenoon no man came out from the city gates, until some of us thought that what we had heard was only a deceitful tale.

"The King's cocks will not fight to-day," said a rough soldier belonging to Fairfax's army; but scarcely had he spoken than a great quietness fell upon us, for we heard a great clash like the clash of cymbals, and soon after we saw the King's horsemen and the King's footmen coming towards us in battle array. I was told afterwards that there were twenty-three thousand men in Prince Rupert's army, fourteen thousand on foot and nine thousand on horses; but I thought nothing of their numbers. The spirit which possessed Cromwell's Company also possessed me. I heeded no more than they the flaunting

banners or the gay attire, for I felt that God was on our side.

"Look! they come, they come!" cried General Fairfax's men; but neither Cromwell nor his men spoke a word, but I doubted not as to what was in their hearts.

It was now past mid-day, and did we not know what was to follow we might have thought that the King's soldiers were marching from the city to besport themselves in the smiling of that summer's day, for their gay attire gleamed in the light, and their feathers waved in the wind.

Cromwell rode through the ranks of his men stern and thoughtful. Calm he was, ay, as calm as a graven image, but I saw that his eyes were cold and cruel. Nay, the very sparks of light which they emitted were not like those which glance from the blacksmith's anvil when the iron is hot, but as those which appear when a man with a steel hammer strikes a granite stone.

Just then some man cried aloud, and his voice swept across the great multitude as though it were a clarion blast. I felt a shiver pass through me as he spoke, and although many who belonged not to Cromwell's Company heard it, no man laughed, nor sought to make scorn.

"*Oh my God,*" he cried, "*make them like a wheel: as the stubble before the wind.*

"*As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flames setteth a mountain on fire.*

"*So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.*

"*Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame and perish.*

"That man may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the world."

I saw Cromwell look at the man who cried aloud, and then his lip moved as if in prayer, but after that there was no time for any to take note of another's doing, for Rupert's army drew nearer and nearer, and the bloodiest battle which my eyes had ever beheld began in right earnest.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOW THE BATTLE OF MARSTON MOOR WAS WON

I HAVE been sitting, pen in hand, and thinking hard for hours in order to find words to tell of what took place on that second day in July. For when I sat down to write it was with a full determination to describe the great fight on Marston Moor. But the more I have thought, and the more I have nibbled at my pen, the more chary have the words been in coming, and the more difficult do I find it to give any notion of what I saw. In truth, the more I reflect, the more do I realise that I saw nothing with clearness. The coming of the King's soldiers with waving banners and with the noise of trumpets was all plain enough, but when the fight began, everything became dim like the smoke-laden sky. Moreover, I doubt whether any man, no matter how gifted he may be in the matter of pen-craft, could tell truthfully what happened that day. A man might as well try to describe the motions of a fleet of vessels in a stormy sea, for we had not been fighting an hour when all seemed a wild confusion. What comes to me now is the memory of the pealing of great guns, the crack of musketry, the clash of steel against steel, the screaming of horses, the moans of the wounded and dying, the oaths of ungodly soldiers, and the

prayers of the godly. In short, it was a great din and a great confusion. Now I saw a company of men ride forward, shouting, "For God and the King!" and again I saw them met by another company, who moved not an inch at their approach, saying solemnly, "The Lord of Hosts be with us!"

At times a clear picture of some man or company rises up before me, but it quickly vanishes amidst the roar of battle and the clouds of smoke.

Besides, I had too much work on hand minding my own little company to know much of what took place elsewhere, for truly we were in the thick of it all, and even now I wonder much, as I think of the men who fell on my right hand and on my left, that I am alive to tell the tale.

For, as fate would have it, Prince Rupert, the very man who tried to persuade me to fight by his side, led his soldiers towards me. Whether he recognised me or not I do not know, but I think he did, for his eyes seemed to flash fire as I looked towards him.

"Be ready, and fight in the name of God," was Cromwell's command, and his command was obeyed. Never until then did I realise how prayer could sustain a man in battle, or how it could give him a courage which knows neither weakness nor fear. I felt then, as I know now, that God answered our prayers that day, for not a man flinched, not one cried "Let us yield." In truth, when Rupert's horsemen came towards us like a whirlwind, we awaited them as calmly as the great rocks on our Cornish coast await the oncoming of a foam-crested wave.

"For God and the King!" I heard the King's soldiers cry as they charged us, but they might as

well have charged the rocks upon which King Arthur's Castle stands, by the Tintagel coast.

I was going to say we met them quietly, but that would be wrong, for the clash of steel made a great noise, and the stern shouts of those Separatist soldiers was heard above the din of battle.

Never did I believe it possible that men *could* fight as Cromwell's soldiers fought that day. Each man seemed to be made of iron, iron into which God had poured His own life. The swords they wielded seemed to be but feathers in their hands, but every time they fell a man's soul went to God.

And yet the shock was severe. Rupert's soldiers came upon us like an angry sea, and if we were brave, so were they. But they soon fell back. And I know the reason. Cromwell's men were men of God, and they were not. I say this advisedly. The lust of war was in their eyes, but not the fear of God. They fought bravely and gallantly, cheered by their general's voice—ay, they shouted defiance at us, even as they fell a-dying. They cried "God save the King, and down with rebels," as, covered with bloody wounds, they charged again and again. But they could not prevail over Cromwell's men. Their battle had been fought eight hours before—ay, and it had been won then. These men whom Rupert afterwards called "Ironsides" could not yield. They felt that the God to whom they prayed was on their side, and so, although one man after another was smitten down, they fought on, never faltering, never doubting. They had no more doubt as to who would overcome than they had about the sun rising the next day. They had won this battle on their knees, and the fight was only the gathering of the spoils.

Even now my heart beats aloud as I think of it—ay, it burns as I remember what I saw. That they were rough, unlettered men I do not deny; not only that, but many of them were stern, sour men, such as I should not care to live with. Many of them knew little of mirth or laughter, neither did they love mercy. Perhaps there was little wonder at this, for they felt their wrongs, and they felt it was stern work to fight those whom they believed to be enemies of God. But they were men of unwavering faith—faith in their God and faith in their cause.

So it came to pass that ere long, instead of Rupert's men attacking us, we attacked them; as they had ridden upon us like a whirlwind, so now we came upon them like a storm. Ay, and as we charged them I heard them singing the psalms they had sung at prayer that day. One stern man of the fens I remember particularly. A giant of a man he was, of well-nigh forty years of age. His voice was harsh and unmusical, and I could never think of him as saying a merry word to his fellow man, and yet he rode forth to battle with a psalm upon his lips.

"*Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth,*" I heard him cry; "*break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord.*"

And then I saw his bloody sword lifted high in the air and fall, only to fall with death in its edge.

"*He saith among the trumpets, Ha! ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting,*" he cried again; and his voice rose above the groans of the dying, and the shouting of commanders.

But if Prince Rupert's soldiers had not been able to break our ranks, neither up to now had we been able

to break theirs. I saw, moreover, that until they were broken the victory could not be ours. Cromwell had also seen this, and a messenger came to me from him, telling me I must lead my little company towards the left flank of Prince Rupert's company, and attack them.

Even as Cromwell had commanded me, so commanded I my men. "The Lord be with us," was their answer, and every man obeyed.

"The sword of the Lord and Gideon!" cried the great fen trooper as we rode forward, and so great a havoc did we make that it seemed as though we cut out a great gap in the square. That moment was the most terrible through which I had yet passed, and that for several reasons. It may seem strange, but so it was, that while men fell to the right and the left, and while the air was full of hideous sounds, I minded me of the time when Rosiland and I had picked wild strawberries down by my old home. I thought, too, of the evening before I left Cornwall for London, when she told me that she loved me; and I wondered where she was, and whether she thought of me. Why I should have thought of this at such a moment I know not, except that I saw a wound in Blossom's neck, for Cromwell had kept her for me all the time I had been imprisoned at Pontefract. It may be, therefore, that the sight of blood flowing down her neck made me remember that Rosiland's hands had patted the very place where the wound was, and thus of other things, so strange is the association of ideas. But I do not think it was that; I believe it was owing to the fact that Ralph Greenvil was near me that I thought of Rosiland.

I have said that this was the most terrible moment

during the battle, and I have spoken the truth, for no sooner did we break the gap than I saw the man who was my enemy. Then, to my shame be it said, I forgot the great battle which we were fighting, and remembered only my thirst to slay this man.

He saw me, even as I had seen him, and we rushed towards each other. I did not ask myself why he had left the army of the west and joined Rupert—that was of no importance. I felt that either he or I must die.

Again and again we tried to get to each other, but it seemed as though we could not, for now the carnage became terrible. The cry of the King's soldiers became weaker and weaker, while those of Cromwell's Company became more and more joyful and confident.

"God be with us," one would cry.

"The Lord is with us," cried another.

"The Lord is my shield and buckler," shouted another joyfully.

"Scatter them, O Lord; consume them as a strong fire consumeth stubble!" was the prayer of others.

They yielded to us inch by inch; the ground was slippery with blood, and the very air was heavy with death, but they yielded so much that at length I got to Ralph Greenvil.

"Liar, coward!" I cried as I struck at him.

He answered with a scornful laugh and an oath as he parried my blow, and we fell to fighting. As I have said, the sight of Ralph Greenvil's face had made me forgetful of the great battle all around us. For the time I desired only to strike down the man who had blackened my good name before the woman I loved, and who had stolen her heart from me.

Therefore I heeded not the roar of the battle, nor the cries of the dying; neither I think did he, until presently the cry of "See, see, they fly!" rose around me.

Then I saw the look of a hunted fox in his eyes, and he seemed in doubt. But only for a moment. He heard, as I heard, the command of his superior officer, and then, cleverly avoiding the charge I made, he rode away, calling out as he went,

"Another day, Master Love-token," whereupon I gnashed my teeth with rage, especially as I saw him mingle with the crowd of retreating soldiers.

We rode after them, striking down a stray Royalist here and there as we went, for not a man of us thought of showing mercy, so great was the heat of warfare in our hearts. But even then it was not of Prince Rupert's army that I thought; my heart was lusting to strike down my own enemy; nevertheless, all I could do was to shout after him like a bullying tapster.

"Ralph Greenvil, traitor, liar, coward," I cried, but he paid no heed, and afterwards I was sorry I had used such words, for he was not a coward.

"The Lord of Hosts hath conquered," I heard the great man of the fens cry. "See, see, they fly to the gates of the defenced city."

And this was true, for it was plainly to be seen that they made for the gates of York as fast as their condition would allow them.

"The Lord hath made them as stubble to our swords," I heard a voice say by my side. "They came out against us, yea, they came out against us a great host, but the Lord, even our God, hath put them to flight."

It was General Cromwell who spoke, and I saw that his eyes burned red.

"They be rebels, enemies of God," and his voice was husky with passion. "Strike, and spare not."

How many we slew as we chased them I know not, but as we drew near York I saw that although the left wing of the Parliamentary army under Cromwell's command was victorious, our right wing under General Fairfax was faring badly. Even as we looked we saw that the Scotchmen were flying like sheep before a shepherd's dog, and that the men, to gain whose help the Covenant was agreed to, were at this time a weakness rather than a strength.

No sooner did Cromwell see this than he gave command to return, and thus it came about that, although we had fought and won one battle, yet had we to fight another before the sun went down. For be it known that by the time we had reached the scene of battle a second time, the day was going against the cause of the Parliament. The men in whom so much trust had been put yielded tamely, and, to all appearance, much that had been gained by routing Rupert's men was lost by the flight of Lord Leven and his men.

But our coming made a wondrous change. Wounded and bleeding as many were, our victory had made us strong, and when we heard the King's soldiers shout aloud at the flight of the Scotch, and cry with great joy, "The battle is ours," we held ourselves in readiness to charge at Cromwell's command.

"At them in the name of God!" he said, and we obeyed him. The sun was now sinking in the west, for we had been fighting more than five hours. I felt that I would have given much for a pint of

home-brewed ale, for my throat was parched so that my breath came hardly, but it was no time for thinking of one's own weakness, so we went forward again as though the battle was but just begun. And so in a sense it was, for the King's soldiers under General Goring were elated by triumph even as we had been. Nevertheless, our coming completely changed the state of affairs. For although I, as one of Cromwell's men, write this, and therefore naturally rejoice in our victory, no man can deny that it was we who won the fight that day. The "godly party," as Cromwell called them, or "the Ironsides," as Rupert afterwards spoke of them, went forward with terrible resolution, and even as they went the Cavaliers became as ripe wheat before the reaper's hook. Their shouts of victory became a shriek of despair, their battle-cry of "For God and the King!" became weaker and weaker, while presently great confusion fell upon them.

"It is Cromwell's men!" I heard them say again and again. "They have routed Prince Rupert's army, and now they be upon us."

Our coming, moreover, heartened the soldiers of Lord Fairfax and Sir Thomas Fairfax. The hoarse shout of the Separatist soldiers, crying, "The Lord God of Hosts is with us," put new strength in their arms, and after much stern fighting the Royalists at last began to give way, until by the time it was dark scarcely a Cavalier was to be seen save the wounded and the dying, who lay thick upon the stricken field.

And thus ended the great fight on Marston Moor, which was the bloodiest, and also the most wondrous, which had yet been fought. Sometimes it seems to me that I saw the whole of it, from noonday, when

Prince Rupert's soldiers left the gates of York confident of a great victory, to an hour after sundown, when they flew hither again, scattered and beaten. But when I reflect, I know that I saw only a tithe of it, for such deeds were done that day as will never be written down.

Never did I realise this so much as when I heard the command for Cromwell's men to be gathered together after the fight was done. I had, in chasing General Goring's men, gone some distance towards York, and it was in riding back that it came to me what a bloody business it all was. Not that I can describe it here; I would not if I could. For the sights I saw had better not be spoken of in detail, for it was all too sickening. I did not pity the dead so much; they had gone to God. And although the sight of their torn, mutilated bodies, and gashed faces and hands was terrible enough, they were beyond pain. It was those who were still alive which unmanned me. Some cried for water, others begged to be put to death, others again shouted defiance at the enemy, while many, even while the death-rattle was in their throat, sang, in their delirium, ribald songs.

Royalist and Parliamentarian lay side by side; Cavalier and Separatist together went to the presence of God.

On my way back I heard a man singing. Although his voice was husky I thought I recognised it, and I turned aside to see who it might be. It was the great man from the fens, who had in the midst of battle been singing the psalms. He was lying with his head pillowed on the body of a dead horse.

"Can I do aught for you?" I asked.

"Nay," he replied, "I am dying. I am even now in the valley of the shadow of death, but I fear no evil."

I looked at him more closely, and in the fast fading light I saw that what he said was true. From a great wound in his body the life-blood flowed, while the death dews were on his brow.

"Ay, but I grieve, I grieve sorely," he said.

"Why?" I asked.

"That the Lord hath no further need of me," he said. "If I could have killed a few more of the enemies of God I had died happy."

I was silent, for what could I say?

"But I have fought a good fight," he cried; "ay, a good fight. Ten men fell before my sword, as I made count, and after that—ah, but great God, how I did love killing!"

And then I think he forgot that I was there, for he took no further notice of me. In truth, I think his mind was wandering, and I fancy he thought himself at morning worship.

"*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers of the earth take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,*

"*Let us break their bands asunder.*

"*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.*"

This he partly sang and partly spoke, and when he had finished he gathered himself up for a great laugh; but the laugh was never finished. Rather, it ended in a death-rattle, and even as I looked his soul went to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

As near as we could reckon, more than four thousand of the King's men fell that day, while we captured a great many guns.

"We chased them, even as the Children of Israel chased the Philistines," said Cromwell that night; "and the men of God have done it all. They did laugh, did these ungodly ones, at what they called my 'psalm-singing crew,' but they will never laugh at us again. But for us they would have been like chaff in a strong wind; it is we who, by the help of the Lord, have gotten the victory."

And in this he was right. After this time not only were Cromwell and his Company respected, but they were feared. Nay, more, it became known all over the land that it was the "psalm-singers" and "praying men" who saved England, and when it became known that Prince Rupert openly declared that "Cromwell's Ironsides," as he called them, were the only men that he feared, the great Puritan general was more highly honoured than ever, while Lords Essex and Manchester were spoken of as wobblers. Some, indeed, went so far as to call them "Reuben," because they were as unstable as water.

That night, as I lay down to rest after all the doings of the day, I bethought me of all that had taken place. I remembered not only the great fight, but the two women who had delivered me from prison. I thought also of Rosiland, and I prayed that God would care for her, and keep her from harm. That I had lost her for ever I doubted not, and yet I loved her still. Once or twice I fell into a light sleep, only to dream of Rosiland and myself walking among the woods at home. But I could not sleep for long, for the clash of steel was constantly resounding in my ears, while the hoarse cries of the soldiers seemed to be wafted to me across the waste places. I knew even that this was only seeming, for the battle was

fought and won. But no man could go through what I had gone through that day without living it all over again and again. Moreover, no joy was in my heart, even although we had put our enemies to flight. What, I often asked myself, would happen to me when the war was over, and would God in His goodness ever enable me to win Rosiland's love again?

But no answer came to me, save the hoarse and unmusical voices of some of Cromwell's Company, whose duty it was to keep awake, and who, to comfort themselves, sang together. Their voices were not loud, and yet I heard every word plainly.

"*They were as chaff before the wind, and the angel of the Lord did chase them. Their way shall be dark and slippery, and the angel of the Lord shall persecute them.*

"*But my soul shall rejoice in the Lord, it shall rejoice in his salvation.*"

After that I fell asleep, neither did I wake again until I heard sound of bugles which told me that a new day's duties were before me.

CHAPTER XXV

HOW I GAINED POSSESSION OF THE ROYAL PAPERS

Of what happened during the months which followed the great fight on Marston Moor I will not write at length. Not that naught happened. Rather, the time was filled with events which set the world a-talking. Nevertheless, those events do not fall within the track of the history I am trying to write, nor have they bearing on the real story of my life. Besides, others far more gifted than I, and knowing far more of the trend of events throughout the country, will doubtless give a full and complete chronicle of affairs.

It may be said by some that, in becoming a convert to a cause which I had hitherto been taught to despise, I have, like all converts, been prone to speak of the excellencies of my new friends, and to gloss over their imperfections. This charge, however, I deny. I have simply written down what I saw and heard, and this I have done without malice on the one hand, or with a desire to paint too rosy a picture on the other. For be it understood, that although the force of events obliged me to turn my back upon many of the beliefs of my boyhood, and although I fought side by side with Cromwell's soldiers, I have never been able to think altogether as they thought,

or to feel as they felt. I think I am by nature light-hearted and gay, and with all my heart I love laughter and merriment. For this I was often rebuked by men belonging to Cromwell's Company. I never had, nor have I to-day, a hatred for beautiful churches or sweet singing, for I love beautiful things, and can never be made to believe that order and fitness and beautiful singing, and many other things which they said should never be seen in the churches, were an abomination unto the Lord. Moreover, their beliefs were not only often distasteful, but repugnant to me. It seems to me that their religion was often more mindful of the thunders of Sinai than of Him who took little children in His arms and blessed them. The stern doctrines of John Calvin and John Knox I could never believe. Moreover, as I have more than once admitted, they were often forgetful of love and of mercy. Nevertheless, when I remember all they had had to suffer, I do not so much wonder at this. They had a stern battle to fight, and they had work to do which could not be done with gloved fingers. Their fathers and friends had been driven from their native land because they demanded the right to worship God according to their own consciences, while others had been persecuted and imprisoned and mutilated for life. More than one in my own little company had been deprived of his ears by the order of Laud; others had been hunted from place to place and imprisoned,—and thus it was but little wonder that they fought desperately and without mercy, believing that out of the stern warfare through which they were passing a new order of things might arise.

Their enemies have often said that they were

opposed to order, and their desire to worship in their own fashion was because of the naughtiness of their hearts. But there was another meaning than this. Their beliefs were to them of no light moment. They had fought their battles on the battlefields of their own souls, and now they could not have their beliefs marked out for them by Bishops or Presbyters. They would not be told what they should believe, because they could not. Many of their beliefs were doubtless born of stern struggles and bloody fighting, and thus they were often unlovely, but they were real to them, and thus no man of them would have another interfere. My friends have often laughed at me for mingling with such a motley crew, saying that no two of them believed alike. But I, who know them, know that their beliefs were real, and that they were strong men, sincere men, and men of God.

That was why I rejoiced when the English army was formed on the New Model, and when the Covenant, which would have it that every man should subscribe to the faith of the Presbyterians, was annulled. For if these men had subscribed to it they would have been hypocrites, and a hypocrite is a liar. Therefore, while I know that many were harsh men, stern men, ay, and that some of them were cruel, I also know that they were God-fearing men, and that they saved England. Their demand for liberty of faith did not make them loose of conduct; rather, they became sneered at for the austerity of their morals, and the purity of their lives.

All this I say, although I believed not as they believed, and although, as the son of Sir John Falkland, my tastes and desires were often different from

theirs. These things came to me slowly and by degrees, and I write them down here so that the truth as I saw it may be told. It may be that in their protest against wrong their zeal carried them too far, but if I read the future aright, the principles for which they fought will yet become the glory of our land.

"I would die a hundred times rather than do aught which my conscience tells me I must not do," said one, who was asked why he would not conform to the Covenant; and even as I heard him speak the words I minded me of my mother's words on the day I was twenty-one.

For several months after Rupert's army fled at Marston Moor I never saw nor heard aught of home. I comforted myself that Rosiland had not wedded Ralph Greenvil, because I had seen him in Rupert's army. For if he had wedded her I believed that he would be by her side. But no news came to me of her. It seemed as though she had gone out of my life, and that I had lost her for ever, even as I had lost home and friends.

Neither for that matter had I ever seen either Rachel Marlow or her sister. It is true that after one skirmish, in the which I was wounded, Master Marlow, the Independent preacher, brought me delicacies which I gathered were prepared by Rachel's own hands. He admitted to me, moreover, that his daughters kept near to him during the many wars (for Master Marlow kept near the troops for the purpose of preaching and exhorting them), but I never saw her. That she felt kindly towards me I could not help believing, else why had she risked so much in helping me to escape from Pontefract?

But she never came to speak to me, nor even so much as sent me a message.

Nor for that matter had I much time for converse with any one. After the new laws came into force I was much busied in drilling our new soldiers, for when the next winter had passed away, and the summer came on, it came to us that the Royalist army, headed by King Charles himself, was marching towards us from Oxford.

The King had, after the battle of Marston Moor, been, to use Cromwell's words, "more shifty than ever." He had even proposed the disbandment of both armies, so that an amicable settlement might be brought about. But even at the time of his proposal he had contrived a cunning scheme whereby, should the Parliamentary army fall in with his wishes, he would have the whole land at his mercy.

Having failed in this, however, he determined by one decisive battle to regain the power he had lost. We heard that Charles despised the men which had been gathered together by the New Model, and the success which he gained at Leicester made him confident of victory.

During April Cromwell had been in London, and thus we had seen naught of him; but at the end of May he joined us again, and his coming gave new strength to every man amongst us. In truth, as we joined the army of Fairfax, with four thousand horsemen and a thousand on foot, such a shout went up as I had never heard before. For be it known that the army of Fairfax feared Charles's forces greatly. News had come to them that the King was jubilant at the course things were taking. "Never," he was reported to say, "have my affairs been in such a good state."

and both he and Prince Rupert were eager for the fray.

Our coming, however, spread dismay in the Royalist ranks, and they sought to avoid the very battle that they sought. They therefore made their way towards the village of Naseby, which is situated some few miles north of Northampton, and here, in spite of themselves, they had to fight whether they would or no.

Now this was the first time I had fought where the King himself was present, and, in truth, there was some weakness on the part of many at the thought of it. For, in spite of the King's shifty ways, many felt with Lords Manchester and Essex that the King could never be conquered, and at best could only be forced, in some degree, to fall in with the wishes of the people. But Cromwell would have none of this; and in this, even such as I, who believed much in the great Puritan general, was much disturbed. For, on the night before the battle of Naseby, he said to General Fairfax in my hearing what he had said before in London:

"If I met King Charles in battle to-morrow," he said, "I would fire my pistol at him as at another."

This, I say, disturbed some of us much, and yet as we thought more about it we felt that such a man as the King could only be met by strong measures.

And now I have to tell of a strange occurrence which happened to me that night, and which, as will be seen, led to events which affected me greatly. For on the eve of that great battle, when all were asleep save the sentinels, and while I went out to see that there was no danger of a night attack, a man came towards me stealthily.

I held my pistol in readiness, but I neither spoke nor fired, because, as I thought, he seemed friendly disposed and anxious to speak with me.

"Captain Falkland," he said in a whisper.

"Ay," I replied, for I had lately received a captain's commission.

"I have a letter for you."

On looking more closely I saw that he was one of my own men.

"How came you by this?" I asked.

"A woman gave it me."

"What kind of a woman?"

"That I can scarcely say, for her face was well-nigh covered; but she came to me when I was alone, and said, 'Can you take a letter to Captain Falkland?' 'Ay,' I replied. 'Then will you do it?' she asked. 'Ay,' I replied, almost before I thought of what I was saying. 'Then give him this,' she said, 'and tell him it is from one who wishes him well. Ay, and tell him, too, to pay good heed to what is written.' Whereupon she left me. That is all."

Thereupon I took the letter, and as soon as I had obtained a light I read it carefully. This is what I read:

"The King hath written a letter to the Queen. It is of great import. If you win in the battle to-morrow make your way to the King's tent, and seek the cabinet containing the Royal papers. The cabinet hath the Royal arms emblazoned upon it. If you believe in the cause for which you are fighting, do not fail to take it away, for it will reveal the King's mind. This is written by one who hath watched you from afar."

That was all, but as may be imagined, it set me thinking with great seriousness. I puzzled my brains much as to who wrote it, and who, having written it, should send it to me, and after much thought I could not help concluding that it was the handiwork of Rachel Marlow. But this did not altogether satisfy me, for how could she, the Independent preacher's daughter, know aught of the King's doings? As it seemed to me, the information the letter contained could only have been known to such as were in the King's confidence. Still, Rachel Marlow was somewhat of a mystery to me, and had communications with the Royalist army which I could not understand.

I said not a word to any one concerning this letter, and because of this I have since blamed myself, for, as I shall have to tell presently, it led to grave doings.

As to the great battle which was fought the next day I need not write in detail, for it was in many respects only a repetition of the fight at Marston Moor. It is true a kind of superstitious awe came into our hearts as we saw the Royalist army in battle array on that summer day, for not only had we heard of the confidence of both the King and Prince Rupert concerning the outcome of the fighting, but we knew that the King himself would be there. Not that Cromwell or the great majority of his soldiers feared the King, but many under General Fairfax, in spite of all that had taken place, had a kind of feeling that to fight against Charles when he himself was present was like fighting against God. Indeed, I believe that had not Cromwell been present we should have made but a feeble resistance; but when he appeared, even those who had been most

timid were most encouraged. Besides, it must be remembered that under the New Model many of the Parliamentary soldiers were untried men, and seeing that these very men subscribed to no Covenant, nay, that they now openly avowed themselves as Brownists, Independents, Anabaptists, and such like, it was feared that they would fly before the enemy. But as events proved it was all the other way.

At Marston Moor it was Cromwell's men who first met the charge of Prince Rupert. At Naseby the young Prince charged the forces under Ireton, who slowly gave way before him; then the Royalist foot, after a single discharge of their guns, clubbed their muskets and fell upon Fairfax's centre, which also gave way. Cromwell's army was on the right, and we were attacked by Langdale, and here all was different. With the same stern look in their eyes, and the same battle-cry upon their lips, "The Lord God of Hosts be with us!" they charged the Northern horse and scattered them like chaff. Complete as was our victory over Rupert at Marston Moor, that at Naseby seemed more pronounced. On the former occasion Rupert and his men had retreated fighting, but the soldiers under Sir Marmaduke Langdale fled before us as if in a panic.

"It is the Ironsides!" they cried. "God have mercy upon us, we are lost."

So fearful were they that we lost but few men in the charge; in truth, each of these men of the fens seemed to have the strength of three, so that Langdale's men literally, as Cromwell had said, were as "stubble to our swords."

In truth, our victory was so complete, that I, bearing in mind the letter I had received, was for

pushing on to the King's tent, especially as his reserves had no more fight in them than unweaned children. But this was not to be, for Cromwell had seen what was unknown to us. As I have before said, the Royalists under Rupert had driven Ireton and Skippon before them, until they were up Red Pit Hill, so Cromwell, who had held his army well in hand, commanded us to return and charge the flank of the Royalist foot.

We were not a minute too soon, for Sir Thomas Fairfax was no longer able to keep his army under control. Even as we came up I saw the same fear in their eyes as I had seen in the eyes of those under Sir Marmaduke Langdale, when they cried "It is the Ironsides! God have mercy upon us, we are lost!" But as they heard our cry they received new courage, especially as the enemy fell beneath our swords like willows before a strong man's blade.

Even now it seems to me almost like a miracle, for the battle that was to all appearances won for and by the King was lost in a few minutes. Cries of despair were heard everywhere, and although I heard Rupert's voice, telling them to hold fast and victory would be theirs, both he and they gave way.

And now I determined that, happen what might, I would find my way to the King's tent; and thus, while the main portion of Cromwell's army rested after much severe fighting, I with a few men climbed the hill which is I believe call Dust Hill. At first this was easy, for I found that a great multitude of the King's men were surrendering, and I knew that Charles would have to fly if he were not taken prisoner with the rest. Besides, I was able to take shelter in a little wood which stands on the west side

of the hill, and the month being June, and there being much foliage, I was able to approach unseen. I had not gone far through this wood when my heart gave a great leap, for I heard the voice of the King himself. I therefore cautiously drew near, and there, unseen myself, saw what I shall never forget to my dying day.

Rupert had come up with a few scattered followers, who were in a panic of despair.

"All is lost, lost!" cried the young Prince. "Thousands are slain, and thousands more are surrendering. I doubt whether a thousand men are left to us!"

"Never!" cried Charles. "It cannot be. Can my soldiers, knowing that I am near, fly before rebels?"

"It is the Ironsides," cried Rupert. "They chased Langdale, and then, seeing we were overcoming Skippon and Ireton, they turned back and fell upon us. They struck terror into the hearts of our men, and those who are not killed are prisoners. I was barely able to escape myself."

"Oh, cursed day!" cried the King, "cursed day! What, have they yielded when their King is near?"

"Ay, they have, Sire. And we must fly, or they will soon be upon us!"

"Never! never! What, the King fly from his rebel subjects!"

He looked around upon the handful of soldiers who had gathered together, like a man mad. He tore at his hair, and stamped his feet in impotent rage, even while the soldiers looked piteously at him.

"One charge more, my brave soldiers!" he cried. "Surely God is on our side!"

But the men, wounded, exhausted and heartbroken, remained mute.

"It is no use," cried Rupert. "Fly, your Majesty; we must all fly."

"But the baggage! the artillery!"

"We must leave them."

"But I must take my papers. They must not fall into their hands. I would rather die than the enemy should see them."

"Then we will take them," cried Rupert. "Quick, or we shall be too late."

A number of men rushed to the King's tent, while I, having given command to those I had brought with me, broke into the open with a shout.

"All is lost!" cried Rupert, evidently believing that our number was great. "Fly, Sire, or you will be taken!"

We fought our way to the Royal tent, while many of the King's soldiers fled; nevertheless, we were met there by a number equal to our own, who were evidently eager to take away the King's papers as he had commanded. And but for a fortunate happening they would have succeeded, for I saw one of them seize a box on which were the Royal arms and rush away with it while the fighting was proceeding.

"Follow me, Lancaster," I heard him say; and as he spoke my heart almost stood still, for I recognised Ralph Greenvil's voice.

Without hesitating a second I followed him alone. I saw that he sought to go after the King, who was already in full flight; but that was impossible, for a number of Cromwell's soldiers had by this time come up, and were in full pursuit. He gave a quick glance around, and then, seeing the wood from which

I had just come, he rushed towards it, I in hot pursuit.

I heard him laugh as he went.

"The King will thank us for this, Lancaster," he said, as he rushed into the thick undergrowth.

But I was close behind them, and, having come up close, I struck at the man whom he had called Lancaster with my naked sword, who fell with a cry. At this Ralph Greenvil turned around, and we met face to face.

"You!" he cried, like one aghast.

"Ay," I made answer, and threw myself upon him.

It was a terrible struggle, for he was a strong man. We did not fight with our swords, but wrestled with each other for the possession of the King's papers. Neither of us cried out, for in truth it seemed to me then, as it had seemed to me on two previous occasions, that it was a battle between me and my enemy, and not between the Cavaliers and Roundheads.

At length I mastered him. By a wrestling trick of which he was ignorant I threw him with much violence on the ground, while the box slipped from his grasp.

"Ah!" I cried, "I have you at last, you liar, you coward!"

"Do not kill me, Falkland," he panted. "I yield, I am beaten!"

"On your honour you yield?"

"On my word of honour I yield."

"Then give up your arms," I said, lifting myself up from him, even while I knelt upon him.

I saw him prepare to give me his arms, while I even then cast my eyes towards the King's box, which lay close by. And that led to my undoing, for no sooner

did he see my eyes turned away than, in spite of the words he had just spoken, he, with the quickness of lightning, drew a short poniard and drove it with terrible force into my left side.

I felt it pierce me, and it seemed to me as though it cut its way into my very vitals.

"He has killed me," I thought; "and he will save the King's papers after all."

Although the pain was terrible, I drew the dagger from me and struck at him with it.

"Coward! liar!" I cried, as I returned his blow.

He gave a ghastly cry as the knife entered his body, but whether I had killed him or no I knew not, for I felt my head swimming and my senses leaving me. I tried to draw the poniard from his body and strike him again, but I had neither strength nor will.

"I will have the King's papers," I remember thinking to myself; and then I crawled towards the box and fell upon it, thus covering it with my body.

After that I remember no more, except that everything seemed to be receding from me, while a great darkness blacker than any night I can remember gathered around me. After that all was a great blank.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN WHICH IT IS PROVEN THAT OLIVER CROMWELL HAD A KIND HEART

When I awoke to consciousness I was lying on a narrow bed in a small cottage room. I felt strangely tired, strangely weak. I remember trying to lift my hand from the coverlet, but I had scarcely strength to do so. Not a sound could I hear. All was quiet as death. I remembered nothing of the past, no suggestion of what I have tried to describe came to me. There was no past as far as I was concerned, neither did I realise with any great clearness who I was.

"I am very tired," I thought, "I will go to sleep." And then, as it seemed to me, without will or thought of my own, I felt myself sinking into slumber.

"How beautiful and quiet and restful everything is," was the only impression I can remember having. Nay, there was another thing. I think I had an idea it was evening, for as it all comes back to me the feeling was of a dying day, and not of a new day.

What happened during my sleep I do not know, but I suppose I must have been visited by some one, for I have a remembrance of some one holding food to my mouth, of which I partook. When I awoke again it was full day. The sunlight streamed into the little room, and I heard the birds singing gaily. For some

time I lay quietly, a delicious kind of languor possessing me. I had no desire to move or think. Even then I had no remembrance of the past. I did not even ask myself why I was there at all. I had no pain, I was resting, and that was all.

How long I lay like this I have not the least notion; time had no more meaning to me than to a babe in its mother's arms. Again I had a faint memory of some one bringing me food, but who it was I had no knowledge, neither for that matter did I care. I was free from care, and that was enough.

Presently, I know not how long, I remember trying to move, and then I felt like crying out in agony. It seemed to me that sharp knives were passing through my body, and that my flesh was being torn. I think I must have swooned then, for I again became unconscious. After awhile the great battle through which I had passed came back to me in dreams. I saw the King's soldiers moving forward in stately motion. I heard their joyful cries as they went. Then I saw the two armies riding towards each other. I saw the dust rising from under the horses' feet. I heard the jangle of harness. Indeed, the great fight came back with more clearness in my dreams than I had seen it in reality. I saw the King's soldiers sweep upon Cromwell's men like a whirlwind, only to be beaten back by the more furious charge of the Roundheads. "For God and the King!" "The Lord God of Hosts be with us!"—these battle-cries I could hear far more plainly than when in the din of battle. I heard the clash of swords, too; I saw both enemy and friend falling with groans from their horses, while the deadly carnage went on. Then as it seemed to me I heard a shout above every other.

"The King's papers!"

With that I awoke with a start, and then everything came back to me. I knew that I was Roderick Falkland, who had been treacherously wounded by Ralph Greenvil while we fought for the box emblazoned with the King's arms.

But I was in bed. There was no noise of battle; all was quiet save for the lowing of the cattle and the chirping of the birds. Through the open window of the cottage the soft summer breezes came telling me of peace and quietness.

A thousand questions came flashing into my mind. Where was I? How did I come there? But, above all, what had become of the King's papers? So anxious was I that I cried aloud, and a moment later a kind-faced peasant woman came into the room.

"How are you now, sir?" said the woman.

She had a kind voice, and she looked at me pleasantly.

"I am better, I think. Where am I?"

"Why, don't you know?"

"No, where am I?"

"You be in my house."

"But where is your house? Is it in Naseby?"

"Nay, nay, this be three mile from Naseby. This be near Sibbertoft, close to where the King's sodgers were."

"Oh," I said, trying to remember; "but how came I here?"

"Why, you was brought here. They thought you was dead when you came."

"But who brought me here?"

"I was told that I mustn't talk with you. Besides, it is time for your broth. I'll go and bring it."

A minute later she returned with a basin of broth, which I ate, feeling stronger at every spoonful I took.

"Now sit down and talk," I said, when I had finished. "There are many things you must tell me."

"Why, you be better," she said, evidently well pleased.

"Yes, I'm better. Tell me who found me in the wood?"

"Why, they that went a-searchin'. Ay, but I made sure you was dead."

"And the box on which I was lying," I said eagerly; "what of that?"

"General Cromwell got that."

I could have cried out for joy. I had succeeded, then. Ralph Greenvil had not outwitted me.

"But the man who stabbed me?" I cried. "Where is he?"

"I do know nothin'. Ask they that do know."

"But who knows?"

"Why, the sodgers. Now be quiet and go to sleep again."

"I cannot sleep. I must know. I am better now. One wound was not enough to kill me."

"One? Why, you was covered with stabs. That man tried to—but there, be quiet, and if you do go to sleep again like a good boy, perhaps the General will tell you when he do come to-night."

"Is General Cromwell coming to-night?"

"I do hear so."

"But tell me——"

"I sh'll tell you nothin' more. No, not a word. I had my orders, and I'll keep 'em."

"What o'clock is it?"

"Nearly five o'clock."

"In the evening?"

"Ay, it is. I won't stay no longer; if I do, you will make me answer you whether I will or no."

Upon this the dame left the room again, while I had to be content with what I had learnt. I waited eagerly for sundown, in the hope that the woman spoke the truth when she said that Cromwell was coming to me.

Once or twice I heard whispering voices in the adjoining room, but nothing came to me distinctly. I hungered much to know all that had happened; nevertheless, I was much comforted by what I had been told. I had taken the King's papers, and I did not believe I was going to die.

Hours later my heart fluttered wildly, for I heard a stern, unmusical voice, which I recognised as Cromwell's.

"Well, dame," I heard him say, "and how is the lad?"

"He is better, much better," was the reply.

After this I heard much whispering, not only between Cromwell and the woman, but between others.

"What is all this mystery?" I asked myself; but before I had time to puzzle it out the door opened, and Cromwell came into the room.

He wore his full uniform as lieutenant-general; nevertheless, he still looked, in spite of his stern strength, no more than a plain yeoman who had taken to soldiering because necessity was laid upon him.

"Come, come, Roderick Falkland," he said as he entered, "this is better. You are not a job for a grave-digger yet."

"No," I said, "but I am very weak."

"As to that it is no wonder. A man with four wounds in his body, each of which might mean death, doth not get strong in a day."

"Four wounds?"

"Ay, four. The man Greenvil meant to kill you, and faith, he well-nigh succeeded. The doctor gave little hope at one time."

"Tell me, tell me all about it, will you, General?"

At this a wintry smile came over his face.

"Who can tell you all?" he asked. "But first tell me this, what led you to undertake this dangerous mission?"

On this I related to him what I have written down here, Cromwell listening eagerly all the time.

"And Charles Stuart was anxious to save those papers, was he?" he cried.

"Ay, he seemed well-nigh in a frenzy at the thought of losing them."

"And well he might, Roderick Falkland. Well he might, for our possession of those papers hath done what cause he has more harm than even the loss of the battle."

"How is that?" I asked eagerly.

"They have proved what I have before declared, but which I could make no man believe. I told your uncle Lord Falkland, and Sir Harry Vane, and Lord Manchester that he was as shifty as a fox, and one who loved crooked ways. But they would not believe me. They were for making bargains with him, believing that he would act as an honest man. Now,

by means of those papers, we have discovered that while he hath been promising one thing he hath been planning to do the opposite. Ay, he hath been boasting to his wife that we are a lot of fools whom he can gull easily. He who boasts of his kingly word hath done this. Well, as a result, many who believed in him have deserted him. Others who were doubtful have declared that it is no longer possible to fight for such a man. In fact, what was written in those letters hath been made known to the country, so that even such as the Treleavens and the Molesworths of Cornwall declare that they can no longer fight for him."

"And my father?" I cried eagerly.

"Ah, thy father, although an honest man, will always be for the King, I fear," he made answer. "But the war is over. Even now General Fairfax is travelling towards the west, and in less than a month will be master, even to the Land's End."

At this, I imagine, I looked doubtful.

"Ay, but it is true. He hath already routed Goring's force at Langport in Somersetshire, while in Devonshire and Cornwall little resistance is offered, so great an effect hath the knowledge of the King's letters had. And so I thank thee, Roderick Falkland. In saving these papers for us thou hast done much to change the feeling of many who were against us. Why, man, he hath had lying intrigues everywhere. With the Irish, with the Scotch, with the Parliament. On every hand he hath been breathing forth lies, and although he may continue to intrigue, his teeth are drawn."

"But what hath become of Greenvil?"

"As to that," replied Cromwell, "you say you did,

after you had stabbed him, throw yourself on the box containing Charles Stuart's papers?"

"Ay," I replied.

Cromwell was silent for a moment, then I saw a ghost of a smile cross his face.

"You were searched for by a woman," he said.

"A woman?" I made answer.

"Ay, a woman. No man knew what had become of you. But this woman, perchance the one who had given you the letter, sought for you, and found you in the wood. He was kneeling near you, seemingly in a well-nigh swooning condition. Already had he stabbed you three times after the one of which you have told me, although the doctor declared that they must have been made blindly; but when this woman came up he held the dagger over your left shoulder-blade, and seemed to be on the point of stabbing you through the heart. But she was just in time, and saved you. She dragged him away from you, and then cried out for help. By this time it was dark, and by the time help came the man had by some means crawled away in the darkness. I have heard that he was picked up by some stragglers in Charles Stuart's army.

"But this woman," I cried, "who was she?"

"Who hath saved you before?" asked Cromwell.

"Rachel Marlow, the Independent preacher's daughter," I cried.

"Ah," cried Cromwell, "and a brave maid she is, I am told."

"And is she here?"

"She hath remained in the village of Sibbertoft, so I have been told," replied Cromwell. "Truly the Lord useth strange means whereby to accomplish His

purposes. Yet this is not the first time that the handmaid of God hath been used to confound the mighty."

As he sat by my bedside he seemed no longer the great Iron General, before whom all England trembled, but the simple country squire, who thought more of his cattle and his lands than of bloody battles. Indeed, I afterwards discovered that he had made a journey all the way from London in order to pay me this visit. I say this so that those who judge him by those stern deeds which marked his career may also see how kind a heart he had, and how he left affairs of State that he might speak a word of kindness to such as I.

"This maid must surely feel kindly towards you," he said presently.

"Ay," I replied.

"Hast thou ever spoken to her of love?" he asked.

"Never," I made answer. "She is to me but as a sister."

"And your heart still goes out to this maid of Cornwall?"

"It always will," I replied, my heart sinking like lead; for it came upon me then, even as it had come upon me before, that I should never see Rosiland again.

"Would it not be better to forget this maid, who, you say, loves you not, and turn your heart to one who more than once hath saved your life?" he said, looking at me steadily.

"A man hath only one heart," I replied. "I gave my love to Rosiland, and I can never love another."

"But can a man continue to love a woman who despiseth him?"

"A man cannot love at will," I made answer.

"Nay," he replied, "he cannot. And a man must ever seek to do the will of God. And thou hast tried to do that, thou hast followed the light of God, Roderick Falkland."

"But it hath led into the darkness," I made answer; for by this time a great sadness had come over me, and my strength seemed ebbing away.

"Ay, but after the night cometh the morning, my son. It is not for us to complain, but to do the will of God. And this is well, for surely His cause will always gain the victory. When at the great battle near here I saw the enemy draw up and march in gallant order towards us, and we a company of poor ignorant men to seek to order our battle, General Fairfax having given me the command of all the horse, I could not but smile out to God in praises in assurance of victory, because God would by the things that are not bring to nought things that are. Of which I had great assurance, for God did it. Ay, the Lord of Hosts did it, and thus those mighty men of war, with the King behind them to cheer them on, were driven before us, even as the winds drive the clouds across the summer sky. So never give up hope, my son, for although the Lord may have no further need of you to fight His battles, yet you must still breathe out your thanksgivings to Him."

"Have no further need of me? Is the war then really at an end?"

"As to that I know not, for Charles is as cunning as a fox, and there may be many fools still in England. But even if there be more fighting, I fear me much thou wilt not take part in it."

"Why, am I going to die?"

"Nay, I trust not; yet the doctor hath told me that after such wounds as thine it must be many a long month before thou canst ride a horse to battle, even if ever thou dost."

At this I burst out sobbing like a child, for it seemed to me that I had nothing to live for. For even if I had regained some of my strength, whither could I go, or what could I do? I was homeless and friendless.

"Nay, nay," said the great Puritan general kindly, "the man who trusts himself to God must trust Him altogether. Remember that like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

But I could see no light in the darkness, even although the greatest man in England was by my side speaking words of kindness to me.

"Our Lord will never leave you, never forsake you," he said again and again; and when at length he rose to leave me I much longed to die, for what was there left for me to live for?

"After all, Ralph Greenvil hath had the best of it," I thought bitterly. "He hath escaped, even after making me a maimed hulk of a man. Better die than be left a useless cripple, for that is surely the meaning of Cromwell's words."

For hours I lay awake thinking of all that had been said, and when at length I fell asleep it was only to dream dreams of darkness and despair.

Once during the night I was awoke by the sound of some one in the room. I looked up, expecting to see Dame Skelton, the woman in whose house I was; but it was not she. That I saw, although the light burned dim.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Hush," was the reply, but I did not recognise the voice.

"Rachel Marlow," I said, "is it you?"

But she made no answer. Instead, I saw her glide silently out of the room.

Her visit gave me comfort in spite of myself, and my heart was less bitter and despairing. In truth, a great hope came to me. "After all," I thought, "I may get well and strong again. General Cromwell only said it would be many months before I could ride a horse into the battlefield. Besides, I am not without a friend. This Puritan maid hath a kind heart, and cares for me."

With this thought in my mind I fell asleep again, and this time my sleep was undisturbed by fearful dreams. Nay, rather I have a remembrance that in my dreams a kind, beautiful face bent over me. I thought I felt soft lips on my brow, and that I heard words of love breathed into my ears.

I awoke with a start, and I thought in the light of the morning I saw the bedroom door close quickly; but I was not sure, for my eyes were dim. Nevertheless, I was sure some one had been there. Even then I felt the warmth of soft lips on mine; I heard the echo of the words spoken to me in my dream: "My Roderick, my own love."

What did it mean? My heart was as light as a feather—a delicious joy pervaded my whole being.

I was on the point of crying out, when, turning my head, I saw something on the little table by my side. Eagerly I grasped it, my heart all aflame.

It was the sachet that Rosiland had given me on the morning I had left home long years before. Eagerly I opened it. There was a lock of raven

black hair, yet shining with golden gleams; there also was a crumpled piece of paper, but it was not that which I had lost. It contained only a few words, which, while it set me a-wondering with a great wonder, yet made me almost beside myself with joy. For this was what I read:

"Roderick, will you forgive your—ROSILAND?"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE APRIL OF 1646

Now as I read this it seemed to me that my heart would burst for very joy. There were a thousand things I could not understand, but the letter I held in my hand was plain enough. It was written by Rosiland's hand; it told me that her heart still beat kindly towards me. It meant more. It meant that she must be near, else how could the sachet be brought to me?

"Rosiland! Rosiland!"

I cried out her name, not because I had any thought in doing so, but because I could not help it. She had sent the sachet back to me, the sachet which she had declared I should never see again. Nay, when I had asked her for it she had answered me in anger and in scorn; she told me she would as soon give it to one of my father's grooms. And now I held it in my hand; ay, the lock of raven hair gleaming with gold coiled itself around my finger, while the letter which asked me to forgive her was before my eyes.

"Rosiland! Rosiland!"

I did not expect to see her, that seemed impossible, but I still called to her because my heart compelled me. All the storm and stress, all the darkness and the imprisonment, all the roar of carnage and war

were forgotten, as I said aloud the name which was dearer to me than all else.

The door opened, and there, God be praised, stood the maid for whom I would gladly have died, and who I despaired of ever seeing again. Surely nothing which ever stood before the eyes of men was as beautiful as Rosiland as she stood before me that summer morning. She was the Rosiland who had bidden me good-bye on that April morning long years before, only more lovely. Then she was little more than a child; now she had become glorious in the first blush of her womanhood. Beautiful she was, ay, as beautiful as Eve must have appeared to Adam in the Garden of Eden before sin had entered into the world, but it was not of that which I thought. I looked into her eyes and saw the lovelight glistening through her tears; I looked at her mouth and saw her lips trembling.

I could not speak, but lay there gazing at her as a man might gaze at a vision from God, while she came slowly and timidly towards me like one afraid. She came within a yard or so of the low bed whereon I lay, and then she stopped, looking at me like a startled fawn. Even then I thought she wanted to come nearer, but was afraid.

Outside the birds sang among the branches, and the bees hummed as they went from flower to flower and then drank the honey-dew. The morning sunlight darted through the open window, while the soft breeze played with her raven black, yet gold-shot, hair.

Even now I am not calm enough to describe the wonder of it all. I, who had despaired of ever seeing her again, I, an outcast from my father's house, a

poor wounded wretch who a few hours before had prayed that I might die, and who even then lay weak and helpless in the little cottage room—I was in her presence, and saw the lovelight shining through my lady's tears.

More than once I tried to speak, but I could not. I think I was afraid. I remember asking myself whether she was flesh and blood at all, or only an angel of God come to cheer me in my sorrow and loneliness. Then I thought the fear in her eyes grew, and she seemed to move away from me. Then I could not help but speak.

"Rosiland! Rosiland!"

I saw the blood mount to her cheeks as she heard me speak, and again she came nearer towards me.

"Roderick, can you forgive me?"

Forgive her! What had I to forgive? How could I answer her? Could I say, "Yes, I forgive you"? That would mean that she had wronged me. Nay, the answer could not be in words. All I could do was to lift my outstretched arms beseechingly. At this the fear left her eyes, and a great joy such as I had never dreamt of flashed into them.

"Oh, Roderick, my love! my love!"

That was all; but it was enough. Besides, she knelt by my side, and I felt her arms around my neck; I felt her soft cheek against mine.

"Roderick, will you take back the sachet?"

Again there could be no answer in words, but my lips found hers, and she knew what was in my heart. There were many things to explain, but I thought nothing of them; there were many questions to ask later, but they came not to me then. For this I know, as surely as if God spoke to me out of a burning

bush as He did to Moses of olden time, that of all things pure and holy under the great blue heavens, nothing is more holy than the first kiss of a man and maid who know that each have been given to the other by the great God.

All the years of fighting and carnage, all the long days of weary wandering were forgotten. Nothing else was needed. I had tried to follow the gleam of God in the darkness, and yet she loved me. All misunderstandings, all hatred and bitterness, were cast behind us. Nay, they did not exist at all, for Rosiland knelt by my side, and her lips were pressed on mine.

The wonder of it all! Long years have passed since then, but even yet it remains. Who was I to deserve such happiness? What had I done that God should so smile on me? In what way was I worthy that Rosiland should come all the way from Cornwall to that lonely cottage near the Naseby battlefield, and with one look drive away all the clouds that hung in the sky of my life? I could not answer it then, neither can I answer it now. But I did not dream of what she would tell me presently, or how, in spite of what she said about her own unworthiness, I learnt that she loved me all the time—ay, even although from a sense of duty she fought against it.

It came out little by little, and every revelation was only to increase my happiness.

"Tell me," I asked presently, "how you found me."

"Oh, I have been near you for more than a year, nearer than you think. Oh, you have been blind, Roderick, blind!"

This she said banteringly, even as she had often spoken to me in the old days.

"More than a year?" I queried.

"Ay; you remember when I came to see you in Launceston Castle? Oh, Roderick, you do not know how hard it was. But I had been told it was my duty to hate you. A priest to whom I had gone to confession told me. It was he, moreover, who tried to make me believe that story about the sachet."

"A priest!"

"Ay; an Italian priest lived in Launceston. People did not know he was a priest, but I used to go to him for confession. He made me believe it was a sin to think of you. Well—you know all that was said there. And yet—I could not help myself. It was I who arranged your escape from the Castle, Roderick; I who carried the light across the fields. I watched you as you left your mother that morning. I wanted to call after you, to come with you, but I was afraid—and I was jealous."

"Yes, yes; and then?"

"Then you went to London, and told Rachel Marlow—that—that—well, all about us."

"Yes, I remember."

"And she came all the way to Cornwall to tell me——"

"What?" I cried in astonishment.

"Yes; you know you told her how you believed if some message came to me from her, telling me the truth about the sachet, that I should believe."

"Yes, I remember that."

"Well, she could not send such a message, but she came herself. She convinced me of what I knew in my heart all the time. Oh, Roderick, will you forgive me?"

"Go on, tell me all," I cried.

"She did more than that. She told me many things I did not know about this terrible war; she made me see that you were fighting for a holy cause."

At this I made no reply. It seemed as though God had indeed wrought a miracle.

"At this," she went on, "I told Sir John, your father, who grew very angry, and even hinted that his guardianship over me should cease. I do not think he meant it really, but you know how he felt about it all, Roderick. This gave me the opportunity I longed for, and so I returned with Rachel. I wanted to be near you."

After this she told me many things which had taken place while Rachel was in Cornwall, but which I may not set down here, for it would take too long to describe. Moreover, she described to me her journey to London, and how she and Rachel pleaded with Andrew Marlow that they might be near him as he accompanied Cromwell's army to battle.

"Oh, forgive me, Rosiland," I cried, as she told the story, "but I have been blind, blind!"

"Ay, you have, Roderick," she answered with a laugh. "You thought it was Rachel's sister who accompanied you from Pontefract."

"And it was you!" I cried. "And it was you who planned my escape."

"Ah, that was because, being your father's ward, I was able to gain speech with one of the King's officers. This was not easy, but I was able to do it."

"And you did not tell me," I cried, "even although I rode near you through the darkness."

"I was afraid."

"Afraid!"

"Ay, afraid that you had ceased to love me—afraid that you would be angry."

After this she told how she had brought about my escape, and explained those things which were so wonderful to me at the time. It was she who had planned it all. It was she who had seen the difficulties, and had prepared for them. Instead of Rachel Marlow's being the guiding hand, it was Rosiland who had done everything; ay, and had faced a thousand difficulties and dangers in doing so.

"And Master Cromwell knew all this?" I asked in wonder.

"He knew much," she replied, "for I had to seek his aid to carry out my plans."

"And it was you who sent me that letter about the King's papers?"

"Ay; Ralph Greenvil found out that I was near. In his vanity he thought I had come thither to be near him, even although I had told him that he was naught to me. By some means he had got into the confidence of those who held the King's secrets, and so I learnt what I told you."

All this I have set down in brief, not putting down many of the questions I asked, or the answers she gave. Nevertheless, I have told enough to show how brave and clever she was, how she often risked her life for my sake, and above all, how much she loved me.

Now I knew that it was she who had watched me from afar; it was she who, night and morning, prayed for my safety; it was she who had been my deliverer.

"And yet you never let me know you were near!" I cried.

"I wanted to atone," she said. "I wanted to prove to you that I loved you. Besides, I could not believe that you could care for me after what I had said to you at Launceston, and—and—so——" And then she burst out sobbing, but her sobs were not the bursting forth of pent-up sorrow.

"All the time I carried the sachet with me, Roderick," she said presently. "It was hard work not to give it you before; but I was afraid."

"And what took away your fear?" I asked.

"It was what Master Cromwell told me after he had seen you last night. Oh, Roderick, he is a wonderful man. Stern, and perhaps cruel, but he has a heart."

And now I have to tell what may seem to some even more wonderful than what I have related. It will show, too, that in fighting for the possession of the King's papers I fought for more than I knew.

That same evening I had fallen asleep (for Rosiland had insisted upon this, and would not even sit with me for fear of keeping me awake), and was just being aroused into a sort of half-consciousness of where I was, when I heard the sound of horses' hoofs.

"Doth Dame Skelton live here?" said a voice which thrilled me through and through.

"Ay, she doth," said the dame, who was sitting by her cottage door.

"And is there in your house a gentleman who was wounded in the fight?"

"Ay, and that there is," she replied; "but he be much better."

Upon that I heard a movement as of a man alighting quickly from his horse, and a moment later my bedroom door opened.

"Roderick! my son!"

"Father!"

He spoke no word of explanation, but I saw that his eyes were moist, while his voice thrilled with affection. I had gone through much that day, and although it is said that joy never kills, all through which I had passed, weak and wounded as I was, left me weak and faint. His coming, therefore, in such a way, was almost too much for me. Had he come in anger, and with rebuke, I should perchance have met him bravely, but to come with love in his eyes and kindness in his voice well-nigh broke me down.

"Roderick, my poor boy," cried my father, almost beside himself, "what is it? Are you worse than I thought? My God, I have killed him!"

"No, no, father, unless joy kills," and then I was able to master my weakness.

For some minutes neither of us spoke, I not daring to ask aught, or he to tell aught; but he kept looking at me with a great pity in his eyes.

"Roderick, my boy," he said, his voice husky, "will you come home, and let your mother nurse you well?"

His voice was almost piteous, altogether unlike his usual manner of speech. As I remembered the way he had spoken to me last, it seemed too wonderful to believe in.

"As soon as I am well enough to travel, father," I said. "But will you have me?"

For answer he took my thin white hands in his, but all he said was, "My boy, my brave boy!"

I longed to ask questions, but I dared not. It all seemed too good to be true. That my father, who had declared that I was no longer a son of his, should

come to me thus was undreamed of even in my wildest hopes.

"I have seen him," he said at length.

"Seen who?" I asked.

"Oliver Cromwell."

I was silent, for I knew not what to say.

"Can you bear that I should tell you, my son? Are you strong enough?"

"I am strong enough for aught now, father," I made answer.

"I can no longer fight for the King," he said.

I looked up at him in astonishment.

"You know what I used to say to you: 'For the King, right or wrong, always for the King!' I believed in what I said, for I believed that the King could do no wrong. I believed in the King's Royal word, and in the King's Royal honour, even as I believed in God. My faith was shaken in him when I heard that he had deserted Strafford, and had consented to his death; but still I held on. Then it came to me that the King had commanded you to be an envoy to the Pope in order to seek the aid of Italian soldiers, to fight against his own countrymen; but I felt so bitterly towards you that I would not believe it. But again my faith was shaken in spite of myself. After this, rumours came to me that the King had broken his word, and had played not only the part of a coward, but a liar. I am a plain man, but my life's motto hath always been, 'Honour even to my enemies.' Still I tried to believe in him, and maintained the King's cause against all comers. But when the news came of the capture of the Royal papers, and of their contents, then it seemed to me that my feet had no resting-place, especially when it

was told me that my own son had captured them, and guarded them with his own body. After that I felt I could no longer lift up either hand or voice in his defence. My son, let me confess to you now, I was wrong, and you were right. I disinherited you, my son, but will you come home?"

Now all this was wonderful to me, for my father was a proud man, and never during my life had I ever known him confess that he was in the wrong.

"But will it be safe for you to receive me openly at my old home, father?" I asked.

"As to that you shall come home if you will, safe or unsafe. Not that I have ceased to believe in Royalty; as God is my witness, no. Moreover, I will never lift up my hand against Charles Stuart, traitor and tyrant as he hath been. But I can no longer fight for him. My King must be kingly; he must be the soul of honour and truth. Should he die, and if I believe his son Charles to be a King elected by God, I will fight for him; but this man—no, my son, never. Besides, you need not fear to come. The revelations made in those letters have done more to conquer Cornwall than all the battles Cromwell hath won. Many who were faithful to the King's cause have deserted him, and when General Fairfax marches through Cornwall he will find but little resistance. And so, my son, it will be safe for you to return—that is, unless you are overcome with pride because of the praise they bestow on you."

"Praise?" I said.

"Ay; even when I left they were singing songs concerning Sir John Falkland's youngest son, who carried away the Royal papers in the face of death."

Of all that followed there is no need that I should

write. The meeting between Sir John and Rosiland, his kind words to Rachel Marlow, and the journey home, while of interest to me, will give those who read this history but little pleasure. Besides, when I try to recall it all, the very wonder of it keeps me from truly describing what took place. Neither can I tell of Rosiland's tender care of me during the many weeks during which I gained enough strength to travel, or of my father's loving solicitude as he watched me day by day during my recovery. During that time I had to tell my story over again and again, while the many questions that came into my mind were asked and answered.

As my father had said, long before I had strength enough to rise from my bed the first great Civil War was at an end. The west of England was conquered even to Land's End; Charles Stuart was a hopeless wanderer along the Welsh coast; Prince Rupert was a fugitive; while many of the bravest Royalist generals had deserted the King's cause. Indeed, as all the world knows, Sir Jacob Astley said a little later to his conquerors, "You have done your work now, and may go to play, unless you fall out among yourselves."

Not that there were not long years of trouble before the country; nevertheless, I was no longer needed, even if my health would have allowed me to fight. And so I went back to Cornwall with my father and Rosiland, who was also accompanied by Rachel Marlow, and whom she took to her heart as a sister.

To this Master Marlow offered no demur. He was so busy founding Independent churches that I think he was glad that his daughter had found such a home and such a friend, especially as he hoped his daughter

would win Rosiland to his way of thinking. I may say here that she never did this, for while the Puritan maid made it impossible for her ever to believe again in the faith of her childhood, she could never accept the stern Calvinism of the Independent preacher.

When he came to bid her God-speed, however, he told me that Johnnie Wilson, for whom I went to Pontefract, was hale and strong, and living happily with his mother at the little farm near Spalding.

"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes," said Andrew Marlow to my father as the two men parted. "The Lord hath chosen the weak to put down the mighty. The Lord, I say, hath done all this."

My father answered him never a word. A few months before he would have spurned him as a traitor to his God and his King, but now he was silent.

We travelled slowly to Cornwall, for my wounds were not even yet healed; nevertheless, as I saw the fires that were lit in the Park at my homecoming, I forgot all about them. Giving Blossom rein, I rode ahead of my father and Rosiland, and heeding not the shouts of those who bade me welcome, I did not stop until I reached the door of my old home, where my mother waited to welcome me.

"Welcome home, my brave boy," was all she said as she kissed me again and again; but I knew what was in her heart.

And now there remains but little more for me to write, for it is not for me to describe those after years when Oliver Cromwell became master of England, and when the King's head fell at Whitehall. I have simply told what I saw, and of what happened to me

sure I should have taken the

I have never seen Ralph
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It was at the end of July
returned home, but it was n
that Rosiland and I were

wedding day, and as Rosiland and I went towards the home which was hers, and which she gave to me, the ringing of the bells in the old Launceston church tower came to us as a benediction.

The anniversary of that day is sacredly kept, for not only was our boy Roderick born on the same day of April a year later, but Rosiland declares it was the day when God began to lead us into the light.

THE END

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"There is a vast amount of s
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best produced by Mr. Hocking."-

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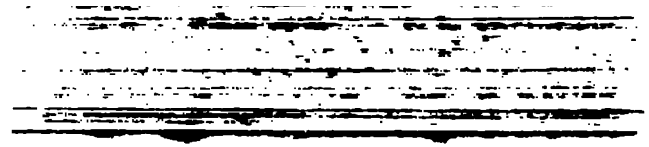

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